

Health needs assessment of offenders in the community

*Cheshire East, Cheshire West & Chester, Warrington and
Wirral*

Report section on **FEMALE OFFENDERS**

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Commissioned by NHS Cheshire, Warrington and Wirral



Cheshire, Warrington and Wirral



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Spotlight on:

3.5 Female offenders

Key Facts:

- Nationally and locally, there are large disparities between the healthcare needs of female offenders compared to male offenders. Local evidence shows that female offenders have significant needs to address in relation to substance misuse, relationships, emotional well-being, disability (in particular mental health), domestic violence, child care, employment and accommodation.
- The 2012/13 CPT needs assessment reveals disproportionate variations between female and male offending features or characteristics, including:
 - ~ 40% of female offenders have been victims of domestic violence (compared to 2.4% of male offenders).
 - ~ Female offenders have higher levels of needs in relation to self harm and suicide at 44.7% (26.7% of males).
 - ~ 36% of female offenders have disabilities (20% of males). Of that 36% of female offenders, 68% of that number have mental health problems (55% of male offenders)
 - ~ A greater percentage of female offenders are users of Class A, injected and addictive drugs.
- Positive actions have been taken locally to cater for these specific needs – including the SAFE requirement in Cheshire, and the Wirral ‘under one roof’ approach to service provision adopted by TWW.

3.5.1 It is well documented that there can be large disparities between the healthcare needs of female offenders compared to male offenders. For example, national statistics quoted in the 2012 HMP Styal health needs assessment reveal that:

- Around 70% of females entering custody will require a clinical detoxification compared to 50% of the males entering custody. Like men, women tend to have very complex substance misuse patterns involving a variety of substances.
- According to the Social Exclusion Unit 70% of all sentenced female women suffer from two or more mental health disorders, which is thirty five times higher than the general population. It is also of concern that women who have an increased level of substance use and a mental health disorder have an increased risk of suicide and self-harm.
- Rates of anxiety and depression were 36% for females on remand and 31% for sentenced, compared to 26% and 19% for their male counterparts.

3.5.2 Fieldwork for this needs assessment therefore included stakeholder and offender interviews at TWW, and interviews in HMPYOI Styal, together with a sample of female peer mentors.

*“I don’t like coming out on my own, but **their therapy sessions have helped. I think they’re brilliant here”***
TWW service user

What did the interviews reveal?

3.5.3 A selection of findings relating to the needs of female offenders are:

- All of the women interviewed in TWW were complimentary about the services provided at the Wirral centre. A common thread in conversations was the ability to access numerous support programmes and service providers ‘under one roof’ at TWW.
- Of the seven women interviewed, it is worth noting that four highlighted mental health conditions.
- The female interviewees in TWW were not complimentary of the general healthcare experienced in HMPYOI Styal, and several highlighted the inconsistency between GPs with regard to their levels of understanding and attitudes to alcohol misuse. See Section 3.1 for more.
- Prison was perceived to have a detrimental impact on the health of female offenders with multiple needs. Interviews in TWW with those who had served short stays in prison reiterated how detention can be a backward step. One had served 6 and 10 weeks in 2010 and 2012 respectively, and explained how both stays had completely disrupted her recovery regime.
- The HMPYOI Styal discussion group highlighted the under-resourcing of services for female offenders, relating to alcohol treatment, learning disabilities and mental health.

What do supporting statistics and assessments tell us?

3.5.4 Statistics presented in CPT’s extremely informative ‘Equality Act 2010 - Annual Equalities Report 2012/13’¹ reveal the following about female offender needs:

- *“For the majority of female offenders, offence patterns, levels of seriousness and risk of serious harm are significantly lower and are very different to those of male offenders, as are their needs. This data is especially critical when considering the proposals made by probation and sentences made by courts. It is to be expected that there will be a significant disproportionality between the levels of males and the levels of female offenders being sentenced to custody and CPT’s data annually shows that lower numbers of female offenders go into custody.*
- *Also because of the differences in the offence patterns, levels of seriousness and risk of serious harm, women are less likely than men to be proposed Supervision with an Accredited Programme, as the assessment process targets more entrenched offending behaviour and higher levels of risk, seriousness and harm.*
- *Female offenders make up only 10% of the offender population.*
- *A significantly lower proportion of women than men are consistently proposed and sentenced to custody.*
- *Significant proportions of female offenders in prison and probation settings present with similar multiple complex needs that can only be addressed through multiple interventions, many of which lie outside of the criminal justice sector.*

“I get support from St Caths for my alcohol problem - they come here every two weeks and it’s been great”
TWW service user

¹ Access here: http://www.cheshireprobation.org.uk/files/publications/document_272.doc
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The SNA² helps to provide that context and suggests that the needs that female offenders present can prove to be a barrier to staff being able to work with them to challenge their offending behaviour. The Corston Report (p.9) highlighted in 2007 that "50% of the new receptions at Holloway (were) for breach", where women were being breached for non-compliance. The women were entering custody with relatively minor index offences such as stealing a chicken, traffic violations and for some there were concurrent minor offences in relatively short periods of time.

- *There are disproportionately significant differences between the levels of mental health impairment, domestic violence, sexual abuse, drug and alcohol misuse between male and female offenders. The SNA was updated for 2012/13 and shows similar levels to those in 2011/12 (where they differ significantly this is shown in brackets).*
 - *40% of female offenders have been victims of domestic violence (compared to 2.4% of male offenders).*
 - *65% of female offenders have needs around relationship issues that relate to their offending behaviour (compared to 4.8% of male offenders).*
 - *Female offenders have higher levels of needs in relation to self harm and suicide at 44.7% (26.7% of males).*
 - *Female offenders continued during 2012/13 to have higher levels of health problems (compared to 38% of the males). This has risen for female offenders (from 58%) to 65%.*
 - *56% of female offenders have parental responsibility (39% of males) and 64% of those have at least some needs in relation to that (52% of males).*
 - *11.6% of female offenders have no fixed abode or are transient and 30% (35% in 2011/12) are in unsuitable accommodation.*
 - *36% of female offenders have disabilities (20% of males). Of that 36% of female offenders, 68% have mental health problems (55% of male offenders).*
 - *Female offenders are disproportionately users of Class A, injected and addictive drugs.*
- *These statistics highlight significant differences between male and female offenders which affects CPT's approach to addressing the barriers that can get in the way of compliance and challenging offending behaviour. The evidence shows that female offenders have significant needs to address in relation to substance misuse, relationships, emotional well-being, disability (in particular mental health), domestic violence, child care, employment and accommodation. In addition, female offenders have the highest levels of financial needs around both their financial situations and their ability to manage their finances and budgeting. A possible additional context is that, compared to male offenders, a higher level of female offenders have parental responsibility. Although 62% of all offenders are unemployed, females have higher levels of need than male offenders in terms of employment history, work skills and attitudes to employment.*

² SNA = Strategic Needs Assessment, undertaken by CPT annually
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- *A recent piece of qualitative research carried out in CPT with female offenders evidenced a high level of need in relation to depression and coping skills, and employment, amongst others. The research showed that over half of the female offenders had high levels of depression. However it did also show that all of the women said they wanted employment. Women identified significant barriers for themselves around employment skills and abilities, as well as confidence. The research highlighted specific actions that CPT is now working towards to reduce the barriers, help them into employment and crime-free lives. These include:*
 - *Helping them to access and develop a range of practical employment skills, CV, interview skills and ways to increase their employability and confidence.*
 - *For the female offenders to be seen as far as possible in a women-only environment.*
 - *Providing Volunteer Mentor support.*
 - *The evidence from the Corston Report and data and analysis from CPT's SNA and the Diversity Grid show evidence in relation to significant proportions of women offenders having significant needs around domestic and personal vulnerabilities. This has led to the development of the SAFE requirement, a bespoke package of intervention specifically designed for women offenders, which is now operating across all of the LDUs.*
 - *The SAFE Requirement forms part of the sentence for female offenders and takes a holistic view to help the women address different areas of need that have contributed to their offending behaviour. Some of the problem areas for the women can be around: violence and anger management; awareness and knowledge of drugs and alcohol; confidence and life skills; parenting skills; information advice and support in relation to employment training and education; and, improving budgeting skills.*
 - *As SAFE is designed in response to women's needs related to their offending, this means that different agencies are called on to deliver certain aspects of the order, depending on the needs that arise.*
 - *The SAFE Requirement shows that given the right levels of support within a women's environment, female offenders can be extremely responsive and custodial sentences as a result of non-compliance with community penalties has decreased”.*
- 3.5.5 Finally, the Report reveals that there has been a constant increase in the levels of both male and female offenders successfully completing Drug Treatment Requirements, during 2010/11. *“Females consistently make up a much smaller proportion (20%) of the Drug Treatment Requirements profile than male offenders. They comply at a lower level than men. Research shows that this is due to the more entrenched patterns of drug taking among the female offenders who are more likely to use Class A drugs”.*
- 3.5.6 For further statistics on female offender needs:
- See Appendix A5, which includes further Probation data supplied for this project, to inform JSNA data analysis.
 - For custody/detention information, statistics from the 2012 HMP Styal needs assessment are quoted throughout earlier thematic findings sections of this Chapter, highlighting prevalence of substance misuse and mental health problems affecting women in prison. Statistics on female offenders is also included in summaries presented earlier from the 2012 Cheshire Custody Suite HNA.

Glossary

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
APs	Approved Premises
CARATs	Counselling, Assessment, Referral, Advice and Throughcare service
CCG	Clinical Commissioning Group
CJS	Criminal Justice System
CPT	Cheshire Probation Trust
DH	Department of Health
GP	General Practitioner
HMP	Her Majesty's Prison
HNA	Health Needs Assessment
HWB	Health and Wellbeing Board
IDTS	Integrated Drug Treatment System
IOM	Integrated Offender Management
JHWS	Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategies
JSNA	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
LDU	Local Delivery Units
MPT	Merseyside Probation Trust
NDTMS	National Drug Treatment Monitoring Systems
NHS	National Health Service
NICE	National Institute for Health and Care Excellence
NOMS	National Offender Management Service
NTA	National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse
OASys	Offender Assessment System
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PCC	Police and Crime Commissioner
PD	Personality Disorder
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
RP	Registered Provider
SAFE	Specified Activity for Female Empowerment
SNA	Strategic Needs Assessment
TWW	Tomorrows Women Wirral
VIC	Veteran in custody
VICSO	Veteran In Custody Support Officer
YOI	Young Offenders Institution

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