# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **Blueprints for Female Offending and Youth Justice and Justice Related Matters** |
| **DATE** | **24 March 2021** |
| **BY** | **Jane Hutt MS, Deputy Minister and Chief Whip** |

In March last year I made the difficult decision to pause work on the [Female](https://gov.wales/supporting-females-justice-system) and [Youth](https://gov.wales/supporting-young-people-justice-system) Offending Blueprints. This was in response to Covid-19 and the need for all delivery partners to re-deploy resources. On 1 July 2020 work resumed on the delivery of both Blueprints. An assessment of implementation plans has now been undertaken to review project deliverables and refresh timescales. Updated implementation plans have been produced in consultation with our key partners, and will be published today highlighting progress to date and outlining our future work programme.

Since work resumed key deliverables across both Blueprints have been met, helping to drive progress and achieve our desired outcomes. These include:

* A Female Offending Profile Analysis has been produced, analysing the needs and vulnerabilities of women in the criminal justice system in Wales along with related infographics. A regular Pan-Wales Women's Partnership report has also been produced to enhance understanding of the risks, needs, vulnerabilities and complexities of women in the criminal justice system in Wales. The proposed Residential Women’s Centre is a core element of the Female Offender Blueprint. The Ministry of Justice is responsible for identifying potential sites, and is engaging with Local Authorities.
* A vision for the future of secure youth provision in Wales was agreed by Cabinet in January 2021. The Welsh Government and Ministry of Justice are working together to explore options that best meet the needs of Welsh children in custody which will deliver an integrated trauma-informed service responding flexibly to the complex needs of these vulnerable children.

Both Blueprints have a clear focus on early intervention and prevention, one that focuses on how we provide support to divert people away from crime in the first place. In December 2020, I undertook a virtual visit to the Women’s Pathfinder Whole System Approach and the 18-25 Early Intervention Service for young adults. The Women’s Pathfinder is a key part of the female blueprint which aims to improve outcomes for women coming into contact with the criminal justice system. Throughout the pandemic the service has been able to adapt and continue to support some of our most vulnerable women. I heard directly from women and young people who had used the service who said they felt supported, less alone and that their lives had changed for the better. By intervening early the service is making a difference not only to the individuals themselves, but their families and communities, and is also reducing the pressure on other services, many of which fall within the responsibility of Welsh Government.

This model of early intervention and prevention is key, and aligns with the Well-Being of Future Generations Act. This is a project commissioned by Welsh Government, Gwent and South Wales Police & Crime Commissioners, and HM Prison & Probation Service (HMPPS) in Wales which highlights the power of partnership and is one of the key areas of delivery of the Blueprints.

As part of next year’s budget, we are allocating a further £500,000 to the Blueprint programme which will support projects which strengthen links between women in prison and their children, and help progress the delivery of trauma informed practice to Youth Justice Practitioners. This additional investment in the Blueprints helps provide meaningful multi-generational improvements in the lives of some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

The strong partnership approach between Welsh Government, HM Prison and Probation Service, Youth Justice Board and Police & Crime Commissioners is pivotal to both the development and implementation of the Blueprints. These relationships have been strengthened further during the pandemic as we have worked ever closer with our key justice partners and key service providers in Wales. Whilst justice is currently a reserved matter many of the services which are essential to operate the adult and youth justice secure estate and the probation service in Wales are devolved to us. Collaborative working is therefore essential if we are to progress our commitments to reduce reoffending and support families in order to build strong and resilient communities in Wales

Throughout the public health crisis we have worked closely with HMPPS, Youth Custody Service (YCS), Youth Justice Board, Ministry of Justice, NHS Wales and Public Health Wales (PHW) to manage the outbreaks and mitigate the impact of the virus, balancing the needs of community health with the health and well-being of both adult and young offenders.

Whilst robust restrictions within both the secure estate and probation services have been necessary to reduce the transmission of the virus and save lives, we have worked closely with partners to ensure those critical services integral to the rehabilitation of offenders remained accessible. Welsh Government has ensured that learners have had access to resources to support their learning and wellbeing. Essential health services have been maintained within prisons and mental health support for offenders has been strengthened. Welsh Government has also worked with HMPPS and Local Authorities to provide safe and secure accommodation to offenders leaving prison, ensuring they have the necessary information and provisions to keep themselves and their communities safe.

Through positive collaboration the testing of adult and young offenders upon arrival at all Welsh prisons, Youth Offending Institutions and Secure Children’s Homes is now in place. Working with PHW we have implemented a testing protocol for staff in our Secure Children’s Home. A national contact tracing protocol has been established to minimise transmission across the secure estate in Wales and the vaccination programme continues to be rolled out at pace in prisons, in line with the community programme. We are now working closely with HMPPS, YCS and PHW to plan the easement of restrictions within the secure estate and probation services in a safe and compliant way to ensure offenders receive the vital support needed to make positive changes to their lives.

I will continue to meet with UK Justice Ministers, to discuss and progress the work that is being undertaking in relation to the blueprints and wider justice matters and I will keep members informed of progress.