

Reducing Reoffending: women and girls in Lincolnshire

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Women and girls: the RRO CPG strategy to reducing reoffending in 18–25-year-olds and females

Key issues:

- Lincolnshire has no Women's Centre.
- Highly problematic - no safe space for women and girls.
- Peak age of female offending is much lower than male.
- Most women and girls in the criminal justice system are victims of more serious crimes than for those for which they were arrested.
- What women told us.

Women's voices

- Four Lincolnshire women who had had experience of the criminal justice system and who told us their stories.
- They were interviewed confidentially by women academics from the University of Lincoln who then summarised those stories in a meeting of the CPG's sub-group formed to work on this strategy.
- The stories were hard to listen to because of what sub-group members felt was the avoidable pain that the women, their families and friends had experienced.

Women's voices

- The women identified influences that had shaped their behaviour: isolation, family problems, debt, addiction, and mental ill-health.
- Traumatic experiences in childhood had resulted in coping strategies associated with crime, such as shop lifting and knife carrying.
- Mental health problems had gone untreated and had exacerbated offending behaviours.

Women's voices

Key themes:

- lack of support, inadequate continuity of care and failure to adopt mental health informed and trauma informed approaches.
- fractured or lost family relationships.

The RRO CPG's work

- Created a Female Offending subgroup.
- New Lincolnshire Women's Strategy: Supporting Women and Girls at Risk of Entering the Criminal Justice System
- Created a Lincolnshire Concordat to mirror the MoJ's National Concordat.
- Partners approached at CEO and Chair level by the PCC.
- Significant buy-in by partners.
- Now a new Women and Girls Strategic Delivery Group which sits within the RRO CPG with progress being made by means of a Women and Girls Operational Delivery Group
- About to create a Women's Centre service: Women RISE

What will change to improve outcomes?

- A safe space for women and girls.
- A place for service delivery to the hard to reach.
- Diversion from arrest and before arrest.
- Services after custody.

Lincolnshire Women's Strategy: Supporting Women and Girls at Risk of Entering the Criminal Justice System

1. For all women and girls.
2. Women centred.
3. Supported by a sustainable women's centre service.
4. Focussed on early intervention.
5. Accepting of the complexity of women's needs.
6. Diversion away from the criminal justice system should take place whenever possible.
7. A Whole System Approach.
8. Trauma informed practice.
9. Based on a Lincolnshire Concordat reflecting the national Concordat on women in or at risk of contact with the Criminal Justice System.

Lincolnshire Action Trust: partnership working withing SLP strategic priority

- MoJ core funding grants from early 2021 onwards.
- Close collaboration with OPCC within the RRO CPG.
- Leveraged the MoJ Female Offender Strategy 2018.
- A women's centre service.
- Supported the CPG to work at a leadership level to gain strategic commitment from services outside the criminal justice system. (This is not something that police, probation or prison can solve without upstream services.)

How success will be measured

Detailed MoJ monitoring of the use of core grant.

But arrest data is a measure we can unite around:

- July 2023: 143 arrests of females of whom 16 were girls under 18. Two were 12 years old.
- August 2023: 163 arrests of females, of whom 15 were girls under 18. Three were 13 years old.

Issues for other CPG Chairs

- The need for a sustainable funding plan.
- The need for services to transform their offer to women and girls by accepting complexity and failure and instead hold and support.

Applicable learning for wider priority areas and cross cutting work streams

- Lincolnshire partnership working is a strength. But this now needs to be seen in the prioritisation of the work in agency business plans and budgets.
- Services should not leave the criminal justice system to punish those who do not get the services they need: women, girls, the neurodiverse, the mentally ill.
- Are partnerships administrative or collaborative?