



Women Centred Approach to Offending Group

End of Year Progress Report and Proposals

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1. Introduction

1.1 Objectives

Lothian and Borders Community Justice Authority [CJA] Women Offenders group was convened by Lothian and Borders CJA to address the objectives for services to women offenders set out in L&B CJA Action Plan 2008-2009. These are:

- Research and/or develop a gender specific risk assessment tool for women
- Develop gender specific programmes
- Introduce a consistent and effective service to women across the CJA
- Identify the most effective risk assessment tools and interventions for women offenders
- Develop a programme to specifically look at abusive relationships for men and women
- Design and deliver training for Social Workers to ensure women offenders are managed appropriately and consistently

The above objectives reflect recognition by Lothian & Borders CJA that assessment and intervention specifically suited to work with women offenders is an underdeveloped area of work both in Lothian & Borders CJA and in the national arena.

1.2 Membership

The group started with broad, multi agency representation from a number of key agencies. The group's membership reflected the range of professionals, from different agencies, with diverse backgrounds, varying levels of knowledge and distinct experiences in working with women, who would be responsible for the delivery of any future services. Details of group members are attached at Appendix 1.

1.3 Purpose of Report

The group met monthly from March 2008 until February 2009. This end of year report summarises the work of the group during this period and sets out recommendations for further attention.

1.4 Young Women

During a mapping exercise the group identified the often different path young women can take into and through the criminal justice system. Services to young people are varied and given the differences and the specialist service provision to young people, the group focused on adult women. This report and proposals therefore relates to services to women aged 18 years and over.

2. Evidence Based Practice

- 2.1 The group agreed that any proposals for developments to services to women offenders should be based on:
- up to date information about the scale and nature of the needs of women offenders
 - evidence of good practice available to the group at the time.
- 2.2 The research and evidence base supporting the proposals made by the group are included at Appendix 2 - 'Useful reading and references'. Work undertaken by the group to ensure the evidence base included:
- Commissioning research to collate and analyse data, examining the profile of women offenders across the Community Justice Authority (CJA)
 - Mapping a woman's journey through the criminal justice system, identifying the points at which a range of agencies may have contact with the woman (Appendix 2a and 2b)
 - Reviewing current literature, recent reports and current practice in relation to assessing risk and providing gender specific service provision
 - Dialogue with commissioners of specialist women offender service provision
 - Visits to gender specific service provision.

3. Guiding Principles

- 3.1 The group agreed that proposed developments for services to women offenders might have a different application across agencies and/or might need to be adapted for provision in local settings for example, statutory/voluntary agency or urban/rural setting. This encouraged us to develop a shared understanding of what we want from any proposed, evidence based, service developments in the form of '*Guiding Principles*' that should underpin any service development in any setting.
- 3.2 The Guiding principles drawn up by the group are:
1. *Ensure there is gender equality in all services for women offenders*
 2. *Women will be encouraged to make meaningful and responsible choices*
 3. *Provide a supportive, safe and respectful environment*
 4. *Build and maintain community relationships.*

3.3 Group members believe that through a demonstrable commitment to these four principles, organisations can begin to provide gender specific services for women offenders. (For full and detailed information relating to the principles, see appendix 3)

3.4 **Recommendations**

All Community Justice Authority partner agencies adopt the principles and agree them as a foundation for the development and delivery of future service provision in their organisation

Cross agency training is piloted to develop an understanding of the principles and the research supporting the need for gender specific service provision and to foster greater mutual understanding of multi-agency partnership working

4. Work Undertaken

4.1 **Information sharing**

In addition to the work noted at Paragraph 2.2 above, during the early stages of the group it became apparent to members that our lack of knowledge about each others agencies roles, remits and services, reflected some of the difficulties experienced by staff and clients alike in front line service delivery. One of the initial tasks of the group was therefore to develop a shared understanding of the services for women currently provided by group members.

4.2 In order to address the objectives noted above the group identified three inter-related work strands:

- Collation of data
- Risk assessment
- Service provision

Findings and recommendations from these work strands are addressed below.

5. Data

- 5.1 The CJA provided funding allowing the group to commission research. Dr Monica Barry and Professor Gill Mclvor of Stirling University profiled the characteristics and needs of women who entered the criminal justice system, in Lothian and Borders during a one year period. This was to assist the group to better understand this client group, their needs, our current services to them and to provide additional information to assist us in making proposals for service development.
- 5.2 Dr Barry's and Professor Mclvor's Report, titled "Chaotic Lives" [previously circulated to CJA members], details a number of far reaching recommendations based on the extensive research undertaken. Some of these will require a more strategic approach across the CJA, with others requiring more emphasis on a local response. Proposals are made under "A Way Forward" to address this.
- 5.3 During the course of the groups work, information sharing was highlighted as a particular problem across the range of agencies. In particular the group highlighted
- the lack of basic information shared at the point of referral between agencies- resulting in a lack of understanding of the wider plan in relation to a woman's individuals needs, some agencies not being aware of the nature and outcome of any risk assessments undertaken by referring agencies
 - repeat reassessment and duplication of work at interview – this can impact negatively on clients, be time consuming and unnecessary for staff.
- 5.4 Group members are aware that there is significant cross over with ongoing work on information sharing protocols in other/related fields and the complexity of this issue in practice. This issue is not exclusively a problem distinct to services for women. In an attempt to begin to address this issue the group initiated discussion about development of a shared CJA referral form containing basic information.

This is a complex issue that would require the agreement and participation of a range of agencies, each of whom has their own requirements. This exercise was outwith the scope of the group, although further work could be undertaken to draft a referral form.

5.5 Recommendation

The CJA consider the use of a standard CJA referral form to use between all member agencies to ensure the sharing of basic information at the point of referral and to minimise repeat re-assessment.

6. Risk Assessment

- 6.1 The group were charged with identification of the most effective risk assessment tool for use with women offenders and researching and/or developing a gender specific risk assessment tool for use with women offenders
- 6.2 The group can confirm that there are few risk assessment tools designed purposely for use with women who offend. One identified by the group was reviewed and deemed unsuitable for 'generic use' due to its purpose being primarily for use with women in custody. Its design focused more on identifying needs and likelihood of misconduct whilst in prison. Other tools in use are not specifically designed with women's risks and needs in mind and are not gender specific.
- 6.3 At present none of the voluntary organisations use the same risk assessment tools due to different specialist areas of work requiring different areas of assessment. Where there is the need for ongoing reassessment with the same client group, use of the same tool would enable staff to share information between agencies more easily and monitor change over time (e.g. a women leaving prison or after probation who then accesses general support services from a voluntary organisation).
- 6.4 Developing a gender specific risk assessment tool is likely to require significant finances and specialist knowledge. It is widely recognised that such a tool is currently lacking in the field but few efforts have been made to remedy this. Embarking on such an undertaking would require a firm commitment, including financial commitment, from a number of CJA agencies working alongside researchers, academics and professionals with specialist knowledge.
- 6.5 **LSCMI**
 - 6.5.1 It is the intention of the Scottish Government to roll out the use of Level of Service Case Management Inventory (LSCMI) to all general offenders, including women, across Criminal Justice Social Work and the Scottish Prison Service, to replace Level of Service Inventory Revised (LSIR).

6.5.2 The Scottish edition of the LSCMI includes an assessment of risk of harm posed by an individual and this is to be piloted in Renfrewshire imminently. The Risk Management Authority will undertake a study of the tools general applicability. The study will include women but it is likely they will be a disproportionately low number within the overall study and at present no amendments are being proposed to differentiate between, or emphasise areas more linked to, women's reoffending.

6.5.3 Group members have some concerns about the applicability of LSCMI to women, particularly given the evidence base supporting its applicability to women is arguably weak at present. Literature reviews have highlighted concerns that in general application of the tool it can over predict women's risk and fails to take account of the different role certain risk factors may play in the propensity of women's offending. This issue was also highlighted in Chaotic Lives.

6.6 **Recommendations**

In the absence of a gender specific tool and in the context of the planned roll out of LSCMI across Scotland, LSCMI should be used, with reservation. This is on the basis that the risk management authority will be undertaking evaluation of LSCMI Scottish edition and its applicability to a Scottish offender population

Lothian and Borders CJA should proffer its use of LSCMI with females as a potential study to specifically examine the applicability (or otherwise) of the tool with women and the possible need for recalibration and/or amendment

SACRO and any other service providers of voluntary throughcare services to women should undertake training in LSCMI, if this is deemed an appropriate tool for use with a Scottish female offender population.

7. Service Provision

7.1 The group were charged with:

- developing or identifying gender specific programmes,
- introducing consistent and effective practice to women,
- developing a programme addressing abusive relationships for men and women,
- designing and delivering associated training.

7.2 Models of services to women involved in the criminal justice system have taken different approaches in the past including having the women's offending behaviour at the centre of the approach to work with her or

seeing case management as the central component. Our model proposes the woman is central to the model of service provision. The group have reviewed gender specific services and on that basis propose the following framework for service provision to women who offend:

- The CJA adopt one consistent model of service provision based on the guiding principles
- The model can be applied according to local need
- The woman is viewed as central to the delivery of services
- Services will be available to women at any point in the criminal justice system including, diversion from prosecution, those on bail, structured deferred sentence, on probation and voluntary or statutory throughcare
- Services are provided by a range of professionals from one location.

7.3 The above framework does not require all partner local authorities or independent sector agencies to replicate the full range of services in the same manner across all sites. Rather, the framework should underpin the provision of all services tailored to suit local need. For example, resources might be shared in partnerships where it best suits local need or moved to provide 'floating locations'. Given the variety of boundaries of agencies this approach may help address the difficulties in smaller and/or more rural areas.

7.4 **Recommendation**

The CJA endorse the above framework for service provision to women offenders throughout the CJA area.

7.5 **Core Elements of Service Provision**

Research indicates that in order to be effective, services need to be in place to address a range of particular needs of women and certain approaches are more likely to elicit positive outcomes. Drawing on the guiding principles core services required for women are set out briefly below.

7.5.1 **Relationships**

Practice in this area of work increasingly acknowledges the significance of relationships in women lives and draws from research around relational theory. Gender specific services fully recognise the need for women's relationships and connections with others as being central to the change process.

7.5.2 **Victimisation services**

Services will provide practical support and therapeutic interventions to address the needs of women in relation to past and current abusive relationships. Examples of this include an accredited Trauma Recovery programme that will be offered to women attending the NHS Willow

Project based in SACRO and delivered by health professionals and a local voluntary agency providing a counselling service within the women's centre.

7.5.3 Substance use services

A range of different models were observed at other services. These ranged from residential provision with drug stabilisation to groups such as coping and relapse prevention skills. The range of services offered tended to be influenced by how easily accessible local mainstream drug and alcohol services were to women. Access to services that can assist women to stabilise can vary across the CJA. Provision of services from a central women only service will result in women accessing mainstream services more easily.

7.5.4 Recommendation

Local models of fast track assessment in relation to drug and alcohol misuse should be examined between health and other partner agencies. Where appropriate, assessment and follow-up intervention should be delivered at the women's services location.

7.5.5 Health and wellbeing services

Services to assist women improve their self-esteem and general mental well being will be essential. At other locations these included assertiveness skills courses and more specialist 'women and self harm' interventions usually delivered by health and voluntary sector organisations. Development of links to primary care services and other health services like dentistry, reproductive health and health improvement activities will be established.

7.5.6 Accommodation

Much of the literature highlights the need for gender specific accommodation and the impact of the lack of this on them and their families. There are only 5 female 'approved accommodation' hostels in England. The '218 Project' in Glasgow is a specialist service that provides a wide range of services to women in the criminal justice system and includes residence for some women. There have been a number of evaluations of the project and a further one is underway (due to report around October 2009). As there is no new funding to be made available by the Justice Department to replicate a service like the '218 Project', the Scottish Government hope the evaluation will highlight principles of good practice from the project to enable others to learn from it.

7.5.7 Further examination of the data analysed in Chaotic Lives across each local authority area is required to ascertain if such a service is both necessary and viable anywhere in Lothian and Borders, given it would have to be developed from existing resources. What is clear is the need for gender specific accommodation that is suitable and safe and readily accessible to women in crises, including those facing custody.

7.4.8 Recommendation

The need for gender specific accommodation in the CJA should be taken forward as an area for further examination by the proposed CJA steering group.

7.5.9 Learning and Employment Services

A review of relevant literature found few local gender specific learning programmes. Examples from England, North America and Glasgow highlighted the negative impact of women's experience of violence on learning and recommend holistic (social, emotional and cognitive), arts-based approaches with wrap around support embedded into organisations and therefore requiring good partnership working between educators, guidance staff and key workers. Learning should be negotiated, relevant and meaningful to their lives, include the core skills (communication, numeracy, IT, working with others and problem solving) group work and peer learning, and opportunities for progression and optional accreditation. Women will have access to mainstream lifelong learning programmes.

7.5.10 Childcare and Parenting Services

The provision of childcare facilities at the location of women services is essential. It may not always be required for use but should be available on a flexible enough basis that child care responsibilities do not hinder or delay a woman's access to the range of services provided. Examples of this were evident within services visited and reviewed, as was the provision of parenting groups by a range of professionals from different agencies.

7.5.11 Prison links

As there are currently a range of providers of throughcare services to women across the CJA, this area requires further work. One service provider visited had a prison liaison worker and this facilitated direct access to the full range of women's services, to women leaving custody who had no statutory input. Further discussion is required regarding how improved links with the prison are achieved. Discussions about having a similar health and prison link in NHS Lothian are underway.

7.5.12 Co-ordination of services

A model where all women have a lead worker is proposed. For example, if a woman is on supervised bail, this worker would lead in co-ordinating services with the woman and be the key worker for her. Similarly if the woman was accessing the services as a result of probation the supervising officer would take this role. It is envisaged women who access these services who at present do not have a professional involved would be allocated an appropriate key worker.

7.5.13 Offending behaviour programmes

A number of programmes have been developed in recent years in criminal justice services for use with women. These vary in length and content but have all aimed to address the specific needs of women in recognition that a different approach to addressing women's offending is essential. Most recognise the importance of relationships and how these have impacted on women, their view of themselves and their subsequent behaviour.

Edinburgh developed a programme that has been running since 2003 and has evolved through the input of different staff involved in delivering the group. It is now a 15 session programme and is primarily for women on probation, delivered by criminal justice social work staff.

Glasgow criminal justice social work services developed a programme in the context of probation 'Stabilisation, Action and Maintenance' planning to deliver this in conjunction with staff at the 218 project.

Aberdeen criminal justice services developed a programme in 2004, having had short term additional resources to do so. Their programme is in 3 parts, initially to increase motivation, and encourage stabilisation before a woman undertakes 13 modules and finishes with making 'connections'. This can be delivered individually, two to one or in a group. This is delivered to women on probation, on structured deferred sentences and on a voluntary basis by criminal justice social work staff.

The Scottish Prison Service developed a rolling programme delivered by prison based social work staff and prison officers to women attending 3 times per week. The length of the programme varies dependant on the women's identified needs, attendance usually being between 4 and 6 months. It is due to be resubmitted for accreditation in September 2009. The programme was used in Lanarkshire by criminal justice social work services and has recently come to an end. The application of an indepth custody based programme in the community has not been without problems.

The English probation service has adapted a number of accredited programmes for men, to be used with women. They also have one gender specific programme although no evaluation of this has taken place to date.

A detailed meta-analysis of fifty states in the United States of America, identified various programme elements perceived to produce successful outcomes with women. These included addressing victimisation issues (domestic violence, self-esteem, empowerment, self-sufficiency), a positive treatment environment and positive staff characteristics (qualified, female role models, caring) amongst others.

Indications from the Scottish Governments Effective Practice Unit are that there is no agreed policy as yet to support the use of accredited groupwork with women who offend. The value of this has not yet been established. Certainly there is no plan to pilot any such programme for women in the next 2 years and it may be that accredited groupwork will not be pursued as a means of responding to women's offending.

7.5.14 Recommendation

Local implementation groups should examine the appropriateness of the programmes available dependant to their local need and how this may fit with the proposed model. Programmes most suitable to local need should be piloted and evaluated.

8. A Way Forward

- 8.1 In our review of women offender service provision, we sought to learn from others experiences. The group has undertaken considerable work to:
- improve the existing data base both internally and by commissioning research,
 - identify core elements of good practice in provision of services to women,
 - identify a preferred framework for service provision across the CJA area,
 - identify a model for service provision,
 - identify areas for further work.

Some key learning points from other service providers are noted at Appendix 4.

- 8.2 In order to further progress the work of developing services for women offenders the group is proposing an inter-related three phased plan set out below.

8.3 **Phase 1**

8.3.1 **CJA Women Offenders Post**

In order to develop consistent and holistic services for women offenders that address their needs in a coordinated and sustainable way it is suggested that a CJA Women Offenders post be established to plan and oversee the development of such services using the CJA guidelines. This will ensure that the services meet the objectives of the CJA Action Plan.

8.3.2 **CJA Steering and Advisory Group**

The current group should shift emphasis and work as a CJA wide “Steering and Advisory” Group with core representation from the Procurator Fiscal, Lothian Health and Criminal Justice social work, police and the Scottish Prison Service. This group would work with the women offenders post holder to:

- take forward the recommendations outlined in this report
- take forward the recommendations outlined in “Chaotic Lives”
- oversee the development of the work via local implementation groups
- ensure that new services are delivered in an equitable and sustainable way across each of the five local authority areas.

The Steering Group would also address the areas of work identified as needing further examination (linking with appropriate services or other CJA groups) to explore:

- The nature of any gender specific accommodation that may be required in the CJA
- The practicalities of providing medical and drugs services as part of the proposed model of service provision
- How to develop improved links with prison.

8.4 **Phase 2**

8.4.1 **Local implementation groups**

Each local authority area should establish an implementation group with appropriate representation working in conjunction with the women offender post holder to develop service provision. This will require membership from health, housing, local voluntary and/or independent organisations, the procurator fiscal, criminal justice social work and police. This process should identify how best to use current resources to begin to develop services in line with the CJA model.

Local groups should also identify where additional resources may be required to fulfil implementation.

8.5 Phase 3

The women offender post holder should identify and plan training provision for relevant agencies and staff to support the above.

8.6 Review and Evaluation

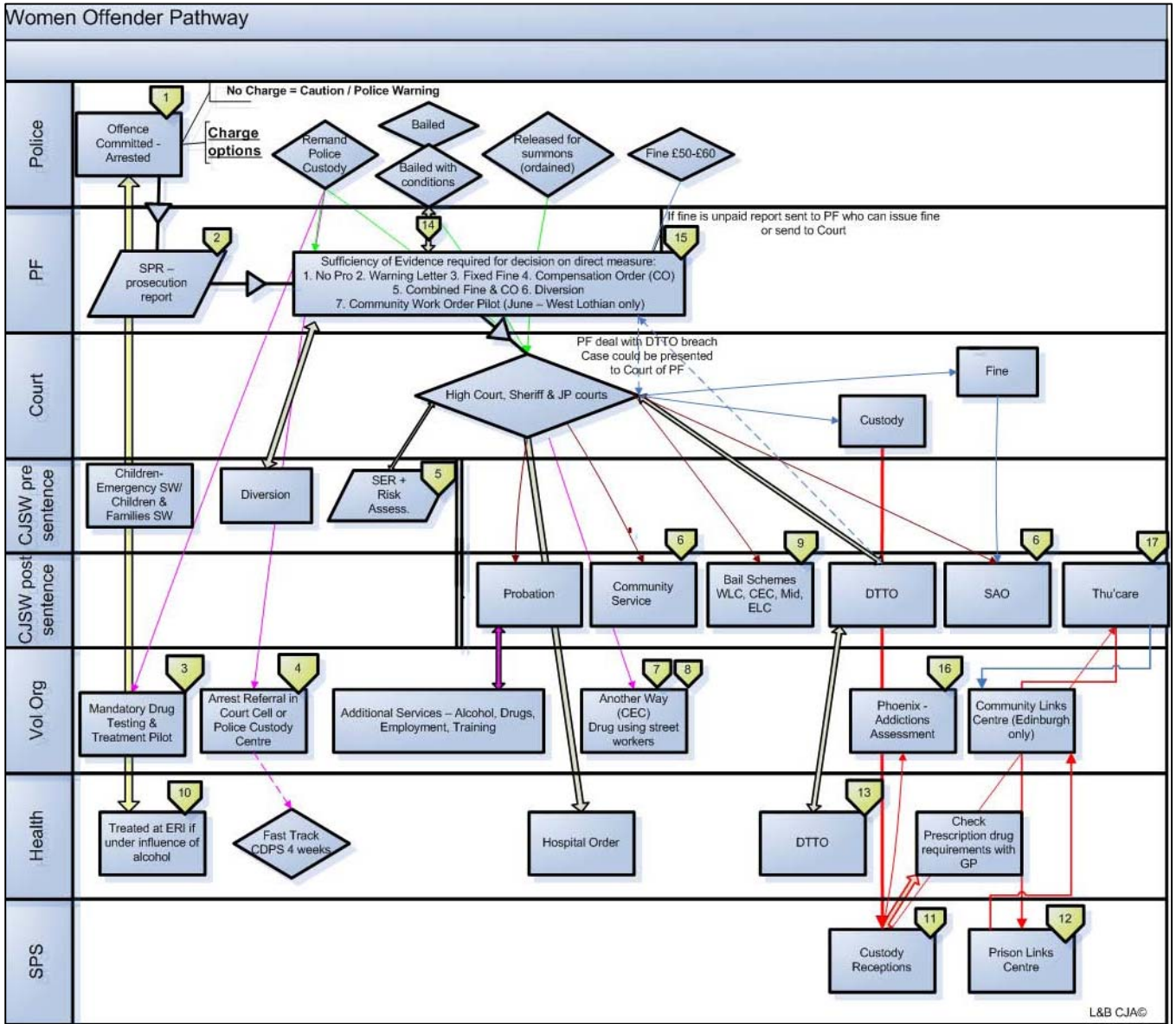
The above structure and its constituent parts will be subject to review and evaluation against agreed CJA outcomes.

Appendix 1

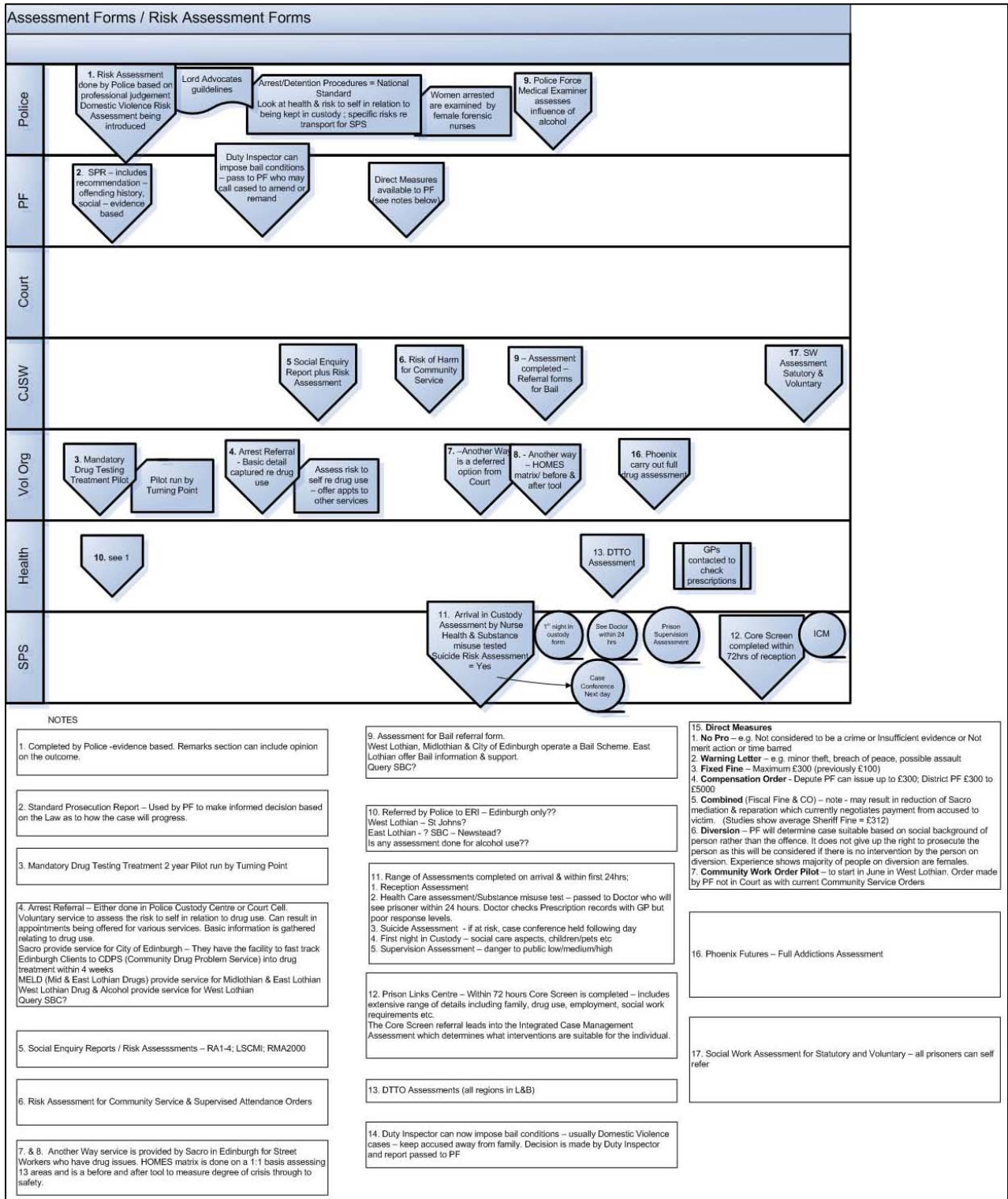
Group Membership

Kirsty Pate (Chair)	City Of Edinburgh Council – Criminal Justice Social Work
Carole Murphy	Scottish Prison Service (SPS)
Cath Gray	SACRO
Frances Smith	Risk Management Association (RMA)
Gillian Lawrence	CLAN Edinburgh
Hildegard Wylezalek	APEX
Simon McLean	SACRO
Jane Ramsay	East Lothian Council
Kerry Watson	Salvation Army
Martin Bonnar	Turning Point
Marlene Hughes	Scottish Prison Service (SPS)
Pauline Black	APEX
Vivienne Murphy	West Lothian Council
Audrey Steel	East Lothian Council
Yvonne Dalziel	NHS Lothian
Pauline Black	APEX
Sgt Debbie Black	Lothian & Borders Police
Lisa Grieve	Scottish Borders Council
Neil McCulloch	Scot-pep
Angela Ward	Scottish Courts

Appendix 2a



Appendix 2b



Appendix 3

The following principles reflect the core values underpinning effective interventions that can direct our work with women offenders. They emphasise the importance of individual women's rights, their responsibilities and the potential for change. They are drawn from a strong research base, including relational and feminist theoretical perspectives, on which similar women-centred services have been developed in the United States and Canadian correctional services, and are emerging in England.

1. Ensure there is gender equality in all services for women offenders

Within the legislative framework of the Gender Equality Duty which came into force on 6th April 2007, there is a legal requirement for all public bodies to a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment on the grounds of sex b) Promote equality between men and women. 1 Gender inequalities continue to permeate our society and female offenders experience inequalities in a number of ways. Women's pathways into offending need to be understood if we are to identify and target criminogenic need. There is extensive research indicating that women who are involved in offending often have a history of physical and sexual abuse in childhood and into adulthood. They experience greater financial inequities, poor mental health and suicidal behaviour, substance abuse problems and low self esteem (Loucks, 1997; Scottish Office, 1998; McClellan, 2006). We need to take these factors into account and acknowledge the subsequent barriers they can create in trying to respond to and work with women. Providing the same services to men and women does not result in equal outcomes for women and there therefore needs to be gender specific services. Services for women offenders can then begin to help women address the impact of these experiences, to improve self esteem and empower women to take control of their lives.

2. Women will be encouraged to make meaningful and responsible choices

Women often report feeling they have little control over their lives, including their involvement in offending. Dependence on men, substances and welfare state financial assistance often results in women experiencing 1 The Equality and Human Rights Commission has produced guidance and briefings on the Gender Equality Duty http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/forbusinessesandorganisation/publicauthorities/Gender_equality_duty/Pages/Genderequalitydutydocuments.aspx limited opportunities and thus their chances to make positive choices can be reduced. In order to rectify this, women need meaningful options which will allow them to make responsible choices. These choices must make sense in terms of their past experiences, abilities and skills. Indeed, it has been argued that interventions holding women accountable for their behaviour without offering them real power to make necessary choices are inadequate and unjust (Hannah-Moffat and

Shaw, 2000; Bachelor and Burman, 2004). Self sufficiency and responsibility can only be fostered where women are encouraged and supported to experience the success associated with making sound, responsible choices.

3. Provide a supportive, safe and respectful environment

This relates to the physical and emotional environment in which we undertake work with women. A safe physical environment and mutual respect are essential whilst working with women who are so often serially victimised in their lives (Bloom and Covington, 2001). Staff involved in service delivery are important resources and their approach and role in fostering a supportive environment is vital (McNeill et al., 2005). This is particularly so given the centrality of relationships in women's lives and the increased likelihood of success in programmes where positive professional relationships are present (Totten, 2000; Covington, 2002; Durrance and Albitt cited in Bachelor and Burman, 2004).

4. Build and maintain community relationships

No one service should have the sole responsibility for providing support to women offenders. All agencies must work together and take collective responsibility to meet the needs of the individual woman offender and help her maintain and /or improve her links within the community. The responsibility for ensuring good, flexible service provision for women offenders involves a broad and creative response. Women should know where they can access continued, responsive support services should they chose to.

Through a demonstrable commitment to these four principles, organisations can begin to provide gender specific services for women offenders.

REFERENCE: Adopted from the: Criminal Justice Social Work Development Centre (2007)
Service Provision and Intervention Guidance, Edinburgh: National Development (Champions)
Group: Working with Female Offenders.

Appendix 4

Key learning points/advice from other established women offender services:

- Establish implementation group with the key partners
- Develop and implement a practice protocol for CJ Staff and other partners
- Ensure that all are aware of National and local CJ priorities
- Agree joint training
- Arrange briefings - i.e Judiciary, Bar Association, CJ Social Work, Addiction Services, Health Services, Homelessness Services and Employability Services

Useful reading and references

- Barry.M and Mclvor G. (2008) *Chaotic Lives: A profile of women in the criminal justice system in Lothian and Borders* Lothian and Borders Community Justice Authority
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- Correctional Service for Canada (2004) *Program Strategy for Women Offenders* obtainable from, <http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/prgrm/fsw/fsw18/toce-eng.shtml>
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- Raynor. P *Risk and Need Assessment in British Probation: The Contribution of LSI-R* Swansea: University of Wales
- Sheehan. R, Mclvor. G and Trotter. C (2007) *What Works with Women Offenders* Devon: Willan Publishing
- The Together Women Programme - Information is available on the Centres at <http://fhg693.demonweb.co.uk/TWP/index.html>