

**Jane Hutt AS/MS**  
**Gweinidog Cyfiawnder Cymdeithasol a'r Prif Chwip**  
**Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip**



**Llywodraeth Cymru**  
**Welsh Government**

Ein cyf/Our ref: JH/PO/38/25

Jeny Rathbone, MS  
Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee  
SeneddEquality@senedd.wales

3 February 2025

Thank you for your letter of 8 January. In your letter you request updates in relation to some of the recommendations set out in your inquiry into [Women's experiences in the criminal justice system](#); and 'Actions not Words' your inquiry into [the Anti-racist Wales action plan](#).

The information you have requested in your letter is contained at Annex A.

I understand Lord Timpson has accepted your suggestion of a scrutiny session on the basis that the scope of the session be refined to focus primarily on reserved matters and how our two governments work together to support people in the justice system. On that basis I would be pleased to attend the session as well. Having discussed with Ministers we feel it would be appropriate for the Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing to attend in place of the Counsel General and Minister for Delivery to better reflect the scope and focus of the session. Our offices will work with your Clerks to procure a suitable date.

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Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:  
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay  
Caerdydd • Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

[Gohebiaeth.Jane.Hutt@llyw.cymru](mailto:Gohebiaeth.Jane.Hutt@llyw.cymru)  
[Correspondence.Jane.Hutt@gov.wales](mailto:Correspondence.Jane.Hutt@gov.wales)

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

## **Annex A**

### **Update to the report Equality and Social Justice committee concerning Women's Experiences in the Criminal Justice System**

#### Recommendation 1

The Welsh Government should map out the cost of the services it provides to identify those that it is responsible for as part of the current devolution settlement and those that currently fall within the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice. This work should be carried out by June 2023 and the Welsh Government should keep us informed of progress.

#### **Update:**

Welsh Government officials have now completed an exercise to map out our expenditure on justice-related activity, following a request from the Legislation Justice and Constitution committee. Our response to the Committee is attached for reference.

#### Recommendation 5

The Welsh Government should set out how it plans to work with partners to scale up its Women's Pathfinder Whole System Approach activity on early intervention and prevention so that it reaches all parts of Wales.

#### **Update:**

We are pleased to report that as of April 2024 a revised contract is in place for the One Wales Women's Service which extends the service across Wales.

#### Recommendation 6

The Welsh Government should work closely with HMPPS and local partners to identify where further Women's Centres should be developed. Further, the Welsh Government should set out the plans it and other partners have to develop sustainable funding streams to support the creation and work of these Centres.

#### **Update:**

Through our Women's Justice Blueprint we remain committed to strengthening the network of women's centres, hubs and safe spaces across Wales. Non-residential women's centres provide understanding environments that take into account responses to experiences of trauma, and work with women in a non-judgemental way.

Under the Women's Justice Blueprint, a best practice specification for women's centres has been developed. The specification highlights recognised best practice and key design features of a good women's centre model, drawing on learning from within Wales and beyond to support commissioners and providers to support

consideration of funding for existing and new centres taking account of local needs and differences.

We are already seeing an increase in women's centres across Wales with Nelson Trust opening a new Women's Centre in Newport and a Women's Hub in Dyfed-Powys, adding to their existing centres in Cardiff and Swansea.

### Recommendation 7

The Welsh Government should work with the Ministry of Justice and HMPPS to identify gaps and to ensure there are sufficient community-based alternatives to custody available specifically for women across Wales.

#### **Update:**

We can confirm sentencers have access to a wide range of non-custodial options for women. These include deferred sentences, unpaid work, electronic monitoring, community sentence treatment requirements and rehabilitation activity requirements.

These options are available across Wales, and underline that custody should always be the last resort if it is needed at all. The Blueprint programme of engagement with sentencers has been helping to promote the visibility of these options, which are longstanding parts of the criminal justice system.

### Recommendations 8 & 9

The Welsh Government must work with counterparts in the Ministry of Justice and with HMPPS to more clearly articulate the purpose and services the proposed Residential Women's Centre will offer.

The Welsh Government should work with the Ministry of Justice to ensure that Wales is represented in the development of the operational instructions and guidance relating to Residential Women's Centres.

#### **Update:**

The Residential Women's Centre remains a key priority of the Women's Justice Blueprint as it will improve the lives of women in Wales and provide an alternative to custody. The Centre will provide therapeutic accommodation for vulnerable women with complex needs in the Swansea area who would otherwise be sentenced to custody. It will also allow women to stay closer to home and maintain crucial family ties.

My officials and I are working with the UK Government to ensure the Residential Women's Centre remains a priority and is progressed quickly. I emphasised this to Lord Timpson when we met on 18 September 2024 and in a letter to him on 17 December. In addition, my officials regularly raise the progress of the Residential Women's Centre with the Ministry of Justice.

We welcome the Lord Chancellor's commitment in the 10 year prison strategy to reduce the number of women in prison through the new Women's Justice Board. I

was pleased to see that the new Women's Justice Board will consider Residential Women's Centres as an alternative to custody.

### Recommendation 12

The Welsh Government should liaise with PACT to ensure prisoners are made aware of the support available to them, including how to contact elected Members from their home constituencies, to ensure people have equitable access to services they are entitled to.

#### **Update:**

Responsibility for information in prisons sits with HMPPS and we have flagged this recommendation to them. The Visiting Mums Service delivered by Pact now forms part of the One Wales co-commissioned contract. We will work with our co-commissioners to confirm that information about how to contact elected Members in Wales is available to women from Wales.

### Recommendation 13

The Welsh Government should work with the Ministry of Justice and HMPPS to:

- carry out a formal evaluation of the Visiting Mum project.
- assess whether there are sufficient resources in place to facilitate work that enable families to stay connected such as the 'purple visits'.

#### **Update:**

An independent evaluation of the Pact Visiting Mum Service was undertaken by Cardiff University and Cascade in 2017. The Evaluation highlighted a number of positive findings for both the women and for their children and carers.

We continue to monitor the delivery of Visiting Mums service, through contract management processes where the Welsh Government is represented as co-commissioner. We also continue to work with partners to improve support for families, including supporting the launch of Pact's Schools Toolkit for children affected by imprisonment.

### Recommendation 16

The Welsh Government should share its view on the forthcoming NHS England review once it is published and set out any action it plans to take as a result of its findings.

#### **Update:**

The Welsh Government notes the recommendations within the NHS England review.

In relation to the Mental Health and Substance Misuse in prisons. [The Partnership Agreement for Prison Health](#) was published in 2019 which set out new priorities for prison health and wellbeing in Wales

The Welsh Government has worked with the Royal College of Psychiatrists and Public Health Wales to develop new standards for mental health services and a new Substance Misuse Treatment Framework (SMTF) for our prisons in Wales.

Although there are no women's prisons in Wales – the SMTF and the new standards for mental health services include a focus on transition from prison to the community which will benefit women leaving prison and coming back into the Welsh community.

Welsh Government has consulted on both the draft SMTF and the draft standards for mental health services. The Consultation Response Summary Report has been published on the Welsh Government website.

The SMTF and the standards for mental health services are now being combined into a single framework, following consultation feedback. We have also commissioned the Royal College of Psychiatrists to carry out baseline assessments with Welsh prisons (which is currently underway in HMP Swansea).

Welsh Government is currently updating the Partnership Agreement for Prison Health and are planning to engage with the prison health teams to discuss future priorities. The focus on substance misuse and mental health is likely to remain a key priority, along with suicide and self-harm prevention.

### Recommendations 17 & 18

The Welsh Government should work with HMPPS and local authorities to obtain Service Level Agreements with the remaining 16 local authorities, explore options for supported accommodation for low-risk women who are vulnerable and work with HMPPS to provide approved premises for high-risk women. This work should be carried out before Autumn 2023.

The Welsh Government should look at examples of best practice and innovation to see what accommodation solutions could be developed in Wales.

### **Update:**

Welsh Government Officials continue to work with local authorities and HMPPS to promote stable accommodation for women leaving the secure estate. The Post Custody Accommodation Working Group have been leading on developing a stronger and more coordinated approach to housing for all people discharged from the secure estate. Over the past 12 months the group has prioritised the work to prevent the prison estate reaching critical capacity with a focus on accommodation to meet the needs of people released through the Early Release Scheme and the Standard Determinant Sentences SI.

### **Update to Inquiry into the Anti-Racist Wales action plan**

### Recommendations 5 & 10

The Welsh Government must improve the quality and availability of data to support the plan and publish a finalised monitoring and evaluation framework as a priority. The monitoring framework must be available to all organisations involved in the delivery of the plan and should be rolled out no later than October 2024.

The Welsh Government should establish a Welsh criminal justice observatory and seek further opportunities for collaboration with academia in the context of the ArWAP. An update on both should be provided by April 2025.

### **Update:**

We have published the [Anti-racist Wales Action Plan: Impact Measurement Framework](#) which sets out the areas that will be measured across the plan, including crime and justice. A full technical document setting out the specific measures and their status for each policy area will be published in Spring 2025. We are developing an evaluation framework to follow.

We have published a [Review of Welsh Government equality data sources and outputs](#) which sets out which equalities data are collected and published.

We have published additional [analysis of the Census](#) to provide information on outcomes by ethnicity, disability and sexual orientation and gender identity.

The [Wellbeing of Wales: 2024](#) report was published and includes national outcomes data by ethnicity.

The Equality, Race and Disability Evidence Units are carrying out a number of other key projects to improve the equality evidence base including:

- Pooling data from the National Survey for Wales to provide more detailed analysis
- Assessing the feasibility of boosting the National Survey for Wales so more granular equality breakdowns can be provided
- Data linking to provide pay gaps data for different equality groups

On criminal justice data specifically we have published a [Youth justice: interactive dashboard | GOV.WALES](#). These interactive products take existing published information on the justice system in Wales which are spread across multiple areas of the UK Government website, and bring them together in a single dashboard so they are more accessible and clearer for a public audience. Both Dashboards were shared with the MoJ data team for comment before publication.