



**Open Report on behalf of Glen Garrod,
Executive Director – Adult Care and Community Wellbeing**

Report to:	Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date:	20 June 2023
Subject:	The work of Safer Lincolnshire Partnership’s Lincolnshire Women’s Strategy: Supporting Women and Girls at Risk of Entering the Criminal Justice System

Summary:

This report provides an overview of the actions undertaken by the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership to support women and girls at risk of entering the criminal justice system.

Actions Required:

Members of the Committee are invited to:

1. consider and comment on the contents of this report and review the progress made by the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership to support women and girls at risk of entering the criminal justice system.
2. suggest how they may be able to assist with promoting and supporting this workstream in their constituencies.

1. Background

The Safer Lincolnshire Partnership (SLP) and all its collective members are committed to working collaboratively with the objective of keeping people in Lincolnshire safe. Reducing Offending is one of the key priorities of the SLP, which is managed by the Reducing Reoffending Core Priority Group (RRO CPG). The RRO CPG’s work is directed by a Delivery Plan which is informed by a strategic needs assessment completed in 2021 by the Community Safety Analytical Team. The current Delivery Plan runs from April 2022 - March 2025. The delivery plan focuses on female offenders and those aged 18-25 and aims to provide alternatives to the criminal justice system that will lead to a reduction in repeat offending.

This report seeks to provide an overview of the planned work that will be undertaken via the Reducing Reoffending Core Priority Group (RRO CPG), in relation to the Lincolnshire Women’s Strategy: Supporting Women and Girls at Risk of Entering the Criminal Justice

System (CJS). This report builds upon an overview of the work of the RRO CPG which was presented to the Committee on 13 December 2022.

Relevant supporting statistics

- Although women constitute less than 5% of people in prison, they account for over 19% of self-harm incidents, an indication of the traumatic impact of imprisonment on many.
- Over half the women in prison report having suffered domestic violence with 53% of women reporting having experienced emotional, physical or sexual abuse as a child.
- Many women in custody have histories indicative of brain injury and for most this is caused by domestic violence.
- Women in prison are more than twice as likely as men to say they have committed offences to support someone else's drug use as well as their own.
- Many of women in prison have dependent children – nationally, an estimated 17,000 children are separated from their mothers by imprisonment every year.
- Around 77% receive sentences of under 12 months. HMP Peterborough (where Lincolnshire women first go when remanded or sentenced to imprisonment) recently reported that the average length of stay for a woman was 21 days. Such sentences do not allow sufficient time for any rehabilitative work to be completed in custody.
- As of May 2023, there were 3362 women in prison. Of these, approximately one third are on remand and one third have received sentences of under six months. Of those on remand, 80% will not be sentenced. When on remand or on sentences under six months there is no rehabilitative activity undertaken with them. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prison-population-figures-2023>
- In Lincolnshire, the peak age for females offending is 15 compared to men whose peak age is 23.

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

Through working with the University of Lincoln, lived experience of local women has been used to inform the strategic priorities for Lincolnshire. The strategy also makes reference to national research, Government policy and local data. In Lincolnshire we recognise the importance of language and labelling. As such, locally we do not refer to women at risk of entering the criminal system or women who have contact with the criminal justice system as "women offenders".

The strategic priorities are outlined as follows:

- It is for all women and girls
- Women Centred
- Supported by a sustainable women's centre service
- Focussed on early intervention
- Accepting of the complexity of women's needs
- Diversion from the Criminal Justice System should take place whenever possible

- A whole system approach
- Trauma informed practice
- Based on a Lincolnshire Concordat reflecting the national Concordat on women in or at risk of contact with the Criminal Justice System.

A full outline of the strategy can be found here; [Lincolnshire Women's Strategy: Supporting Women and Girls at Risk of Entering the Criminal Justice System.](#)

The Lincolnshire Strategy is aligned to the [Female Offender Strategy \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#), 2018. The national strategy envisages a limited role for government and promotes a framework for implementation that is:

- Locally led
- Partnership focused
- Evidence-based

Women and Girls Strategic Delivery Group

A Strategic Delivery Group (SDG) was established in June 2022 in response to the Lincolnshire Women's Strategy: Supporting Women and Girls at Risk of Entering the Criminal Justice System. The SDG aims to drive improvements in the partnership response to women and girls within the CJS, with a view to increasing the use of appropriate diversion, ensuring their gender-specific needs within the CJS are recognised and addressed. The overarching aim of the SDG is to improve outcomes for women and girls in Lincolnshire through targeted and evidence-based approaches. Members of the group represent Chief Executive Officers (CEO), across 27 organisations, that have signed a [Concordat](#) confirming their commitment to work together and make it a priority to deliver the strategy.

Lincolnshire County Council's CEO has signed this concordat and representation is provided via the Children's Services (including Youth Offending/Future4Me) and the Adult Care and Community Wellbeing directorates.

The SDG oversees and manages the Supporting Women and Girls at Risk of Entering the Criminal Justice System delivery plan. Cross cutting workstreams and partnership priorities are also embedded, for example the Out of Court Disposals Working Group and the Violence Against Women and Girls Working Group, both of which are led by Lincolnshire Police. Representation is also provided from the Lincolnshire Domestic Abuse Partnership and the Stay Safe Partnership.

The SDG has invited input from areas with established women's centres and pathways to present at the SDG. For example, Norfolk presented information about their Wonder Plus project, which focuses on engaging with women in rural areas, and shared examples of return upon investment achieved through this approach. Greater Manchester presented an overview of their whole systems approach. The Nottinghamshire Women's Centre Services provided learning in relation to the provision of therapeutic services for women and girls who have experienced trauma and women's centre models.

See Appendix A for a visual of representation of governance arrangements.

Initial Delivery Plan

An overview of the initial delivery plan has been highlighted below. It should be noted that the final version will be completed upon confirmation of funding successfully gained to date, commitments made by concordat signatories and ongoing engagement of women with lived experience.

- Voices of Women and Girls

As noted previously, the Lincolnshire Women's Strategy fully embeds the voices of women with lived experience. They will continue to be engaged on an ongoing and meaningful basis. This will be facilitated through the University of Lincoln and Lincolnshire Action Trust. Where not directly noted in the overview of the initial delivery plan, it should be noted that the voices of women and girls will continue to be gained and responded to.

Women with lived experience have told us that:

- they had only received positive support within the criminal justice system itself – they had simply been ignored by existing services with opportunities for diversion missed.
- Support helped women build positive identities. This was not only mental health support, but also peer support, coaching, mentoring and kindness; activities which should be integrated within mental health services.
- Services should be trauma informed from day one.
- The women's experiences told us that third sector interventions were preferred to mainstream service provision - reinforcing the lessons of much broader research.

- Women's Centre Approach

The Safer Lincolnshire Partnership is aware that women-specific services found in other areas (even those similar in geography and population) are absent in Lincolnshire, to the detriment of women and girls in the county. It has been decided to find a way forward by supporting community and other services to build capacity in working with women and girls. Lincolnshire currently does not have a Women's Centre despite this being a working and evidenced model in other areas.

Safe spaces, in the form of a Women's Centre Approach, must be offered to women in Lincolnshire. These must also be made accessible to those who do not live in Lincoln. The venues must be neutral and not have any association with the criminal justice system. Services, where possible, should be accessible at the women's centre. The strategy is to run with an approach and not a building due to rurality, the size of the county, lack of transport and the cost of transport. The approach is the provision of holistic services in various areas of the county where women's needs can be met in a trauma informed, gender informed way, for example, health, accommodation, victim support, employment advice, benefits advice etc. This will be led by Lincolnshire Action Trust who have invested considerable time and resource to the Women's Strategy to date.

The women's centre approach will be supported by a Navigator who will signpost women to services and support them to attend appointments. It should be noted that Future4Me offer support to girls at risk of entering the criminal justice system, if they are identified via the Joint Diversionary Panel, in a space that is safe for them.

- Online Services/signposting

The delivery plan recognises that we are working in the context of individuals increasingly making use of online services. The delivery plan seeks to ensure that the women's centre approach and services available to women and girls in Lincolnshire are clearly signposted. This includes considering making use of existing platforms to promote and signpost to additional services. This could include requested "space" on websites. For example, Connect to Support, How Are You Lincolnshire, Victim Lincs, Lincolnshire Domestic Abuse Partnership pages and the Council's Family Services Directory.

The SDG and providers of the Women's Centre Approach will explore if remote appointments can be offered to women who need support.

- Evaluation and research

- Strategy and Delivery Plan Evaluation - this will be undertaken by the University of Lincoln. It will seek to evaluate the benefits at an individual level, overarching data around improved outcomes for women and changes at a systems level via a return-on-investment analysis.
- PHD Research - this will seek to increase the evidence base of the needs of girls and how these could be targeted to prevent future entry into the criminal justice system. This will be undertaken by a University of Lincoln PhD student working with Children's Services and Future4Me. The proposal is in the final stages of development prior to ethical approval.
- Masters Research Project - this project was recently approved by the RRO CPG. This relates to evaluating the pathways for women who are released from custody. It will focus on releases into Lincolnshire and provide comparative data for those released to the Humberside region. This project is in the very early stages of development.

- Trauma Informed Approaches Training

At present it is not clear what consistent and evidence-based training staff receive to ensure that they work in a trauma informed manner. The delivery plan cites the importance of mapping what training is available, gap analysis and developing a training offer that meets the needs of staff working in all sectors. It is vital that at all points of contact, women and girls are supported in a trauma informed way.

- Communication and Engagement

As a result of the presentations from other areas it was noted that the deliverables would benefit from a communication and engagement plan. This plan must include elements that are public facing, targeted at women and girls who are at risk of entering the criminal justice system and professionals. Where the communication and engagement are

targeted, advice from women and girls with lived experience will be gained to inform the approaches used. It is anticipated that this plan will be managed by a System Coordinator. The communications and engagement plan will also include measures to determine the impact of such activities.

- Data/system mapping

It is anticipated that the System Coordinator will work with the University of Lincoln to fully map the current provision for women and girls in Lincolnshire. This will include noting gaps in service provision. Data will be gained to gain an indication of what the likely outcomes at present are for women and girls who are at risk of entering the criminal justice system or have already had contact with the criminal justice system. This will provide a benchmark to inform the overarching evaluation of the strategy.

At present, data is provided on a routine basis to the SDG in relation to girls known to Future4Me and women known to the Lincolnshire Probation Service. Through mapping their needs and unmet needs this can also give an indication of what service provision is required.

The Lincolnshire Delivery Plan is aligned to the [Female Offender Strategy Delivery Plan 2022-25](#) (Jan, 2023).

Funding and Sustainability

In December 2022, funding bids were submitted to the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice to secure funding to support implementing the delivery plan.

Following central delays, it was announced, in March 2023, that the Home Office funding had not been secured. This funding would have been to fund the development of whole system approaches. The local bid included cases to develop staff training, fund a System Coordinator post and fund an overarching evaluation of the implementation of the strategy. The evaluation is essential to demonstrate the effectiveness of the local delivery of the strategy and in turn improve the likelihood of future funding bids being successful.

Since this date, members of the SDG have worked together to produce a business case in which two concordat signatories, one of which is the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), will fund the System Navigator post for a period of 18 months and provide funding towards the overarching evaluation. Further details of costs and names of partners cannot be released until the final formal documents are completed. Members of the SDG are also working with the University of Lincoln to explore further funding for the evaluation via the Economic and Social Research Council.

Members of the SDG are now working with the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Adults Board to investigate if their training platform can be utilised to host and develop trauma informed training for staff.

In relation to the Ministry of Justice funding bid, for core costs and innovation the indications are presenting as very positive at the time of writing this report. However,

sharing further information about the outcome is embargoed by the Ministry of Justice at this time. Should the result be favourable, this funding will be utilised to initiate the women's centre approach and fund the Navigator post.

Due to the reasons noted above, this report is unable to give a full indication of the funding that is likely to be received soon.

Several organisations including the Lincolnshire Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and Lincolnshire Action Trust, have demonstrated a significant commitment in terms of time, resources and, where applicable, finances to date. However, to further improve sustainability, it is imperative that concordat signatories demonstrate the commitments that they have made. This includes a commitment to:

“Apply the principles of the Lincolnshire Women's Strategy in the provision and commissioning of all services in Lincolnshire”.

To date, a number of organisations including the PCC, East Midlands Probation and Lincolnshire Action Trust have demonstrated a significant commitment in terms of time, resources and where applicable finances to progress delivery of the strategy.

On 23 May 2023, the “Support that changes women's lives” conference was held in the Council's Council Chamber. The purpose of this conference was to remind signatories of the importance and value of this work and gain a commitment from them regarding what resources and support they can offer, even if this is not a financial contribution. The organisers of this event extend their appreciation to the Councillors who attended.

Key deliverables to be achieved within the next 12 months

- The PCC and the Chair of SLP will jointly write to signatories of the concordat who did not attend and share information at the “Support that Changes Women's Lives” Conference on 23 May. They will be asked to confirm their resource commitment.
- Finalise funding for the System Coordinator Role and the Evaluation.
- Recruit staff and launch the women's centre approach with key services, that are tailored to the needs of women, being delivered on site at women's centres.
- Confirm the process by which operational staff will be upskilled and trained to ensure that they are working with women and girls using trauma informed approaches.
- Via the initial stages of the overarching strategy evaluation, gain benchmarking data so that the evaluation can measure the success of the strategy.
- Concordat signatories identify what resources they will commit to progress the delivery plan.

2. Conclusion

Members of the Committee are invited to consider and comment on the contents of this report and review the progress made by the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership to support women and girls at risk of entering the criminal justice system.

Members of the Committee are also invited to suggest how they may be able to assist with promoting and supporting this workstream within their networks. If Committee members are active on social media, they are invited to follow the following social media accounts and repost our key messages:

Twitter: [@SaferLincs](https://twitter.com/SaferLincs)

Facebook: www.facebook.com/saferlincs

Committee members are also invited to sign up to our quarterly [SLP Newsletter](#).

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

Not applicable

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	SDG Governance Arrangements

5. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

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