



The future of the female custodial estate in Scotland – regional consultation workshops

Background

On Monday, 23 January 2015, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice announced that plans for a female prison in Inverclyde would not go ahead because they did not fit with his vision of how to address female offending. He made it clear that he would like to see Scotland take a more radical and ambitious approach that would deliver a female prison estate which is more in keeping with the recommendations of the Commission on Women Offenders, chaired by Dame Eilish Angiolini QC, DBE.

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/Review/commissiononwomenoffenders/finalreport-2012>

We know that women offenders are far less likely to be a danger to the public compared with men. We also know that the families and children of female offenders are more likely to suffer negative consequences and offend themselves if mothers are held in custody miles away from home. We need to ensure that links to the family and community can be maintained, whilst targeted work is undertaken by women to address the specific issues which are fuelling their offending behaviour such as alcohol, drugs or mental health issues.

The Scottish Government and the Scottish Prison Service are now undertaking a period of extensive engagement with key partners. This workshop forms part of that consultation process. We would like to hear your views on how we can transform our approach to custody for women so that we can help them break the cycle of reoffending and they can start making a positive contribution to society.

At this stage, we envisage an estate which will include a small national facility for women who pose a high risk to themselves or to the community; a separate facility for young women and a range of smaller, regional and local facilities which could include community-based residential facilities.

We are particularly interested to hear your views and ideas on what some of the key aspects of the future female prison estate should look like or take in to account. These include security; regime; ethos; multi-disciplinary staffing profile; holistic service provision; Throughcare; and links to existing community support and services. This list is illustrative and we hope the discussion will not be limited to these issues although, clearly, we expect them to feature in the discussion on the day.

Format for the workshop

The half day event is being hosted by your local Community Justice Authority (CJA) on behalf of the Scottish Government (SG) and the Scottish Prison Service (SPS). Details of where and when your local event will take place will follow in due course.

There will be a joint SG/ SPS presentation at the start of the event to set the scene followed by group discussions and a final plenary discussion and opportunity to ask questions.

The event will be independently facilitated and written up to ensure the range of views and opinions expressed are recorded and can inform the development work that will follow.

There will also be the opportunity to network over lunch before or after the event depending on the start time in your locality.