

Press release: Funding boost for vulnerable female offenders in the community

- £3.3 million awarded to 12 organisations in first wave of community services investment
- Funding covers services from employment to counselling in areas from Brighton to Barnsley
- It is part of the Government's commitment to divert vulnerable women from prison to community support

This follows the publication of the [Female Offender Strategy](#), which set out a range of measures aimed at shifting focus away from custody towards rehabilitative community services.

The 12 successful bidders were chosen following a comprehensive assessment process. The funding was offered to help sustain existing services in some cases and improve or provide new ones in others – covering both female offenders and women at risk of offending in the community. There is a further £1.7 million of funding which is part of the female offender strategy and will be awarded in the coming months.

Justice Minister Edward Argar said:

I am delighted to announce the allocation of the first wave of funding and hope it will pave the way for vulnerable women across the country to receive the additional specialist support they need.

Evidence shows short sentences often fail to break the cycle of reoffending and we have set out clearly in our strategy a desire to divert women away from custody wherever possible.

This investment is a vital first step in achieving this aim, and expanding these essential services will help break the cycle of offending and prevent further victims.

Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland, Barry Coppinger said:

I am committed to delivering services that help offenders break the cycle of criminal behaviour and will assist them in tackling the underlying issues that cause them to offend.

This additional investment will allow us to enhance the support available for female offenders in Cleveland, particularly offenders from a BAME background or who have experienced domestic or sexual violence.

These vulnerable groups need additional support to enable them to make the positive changes needed to turn away from crime and look to a brighter future. I'm delighted these additional funds from the MoJ will help to make this a reality in Cleveland.

The funding recognises that while serious crimes will always be punished proportionally, a large number of female offenders are in extremely vulnerable positions. Many face issues with substance misuse and mental health problems, often as a result of repeated abuse and trauma – for example some 60% of female offenders have experienced domestic abuse.

Providing grants directly to small organisations for targeted projects ensures excellent value for money as they work directly in the communities they serve and are best placed to understand the challenges faced by the women they support. Each project will be evaluated to measure its success and any relevant learning can be applied to other vulnerable women across the criminal justice system.

Several of the grant recipients will use their funding to provide specialist services for domestic abuse victims. In Brighton & Hove, the funding will jump-start a Domestic Violence Trauma (DVT) pilot, supporting women who have been victims of domestic abuse and have complex issues, including homelessness and mental health problems.

The PACT project in Berkshire includes a focus on employment – providing access to coffee machines for vulnerable women to receive specialist barista training. At the same time, a new dedicated BAME support worker will be recruited at the same organisation to work with vulnerable local groups.

This funding is just one of the many areas of reform being driven forward by the Government, with the Justice Secretary launching a dedicated Education and Employment Strategy earlier this year to set prisoners on a path to employment and break them out of the cycle of crime.

Notes to editors:

The 12 successful bidders are:

Stockport Women's Centre

Funding will boost services being delivered at women's centres across Greater Manchester, including support for women who have experienced domestic abuse and other complex needs.

Equinox Care, Brighton & Hove

A Domestic Violence Trauma worker pilot and other services to address women's needs will be launched within its Supported Accommodation Service.

Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner for Devon & Cornwall

Funding will provide additional specialist outreach services across the counties, particularly to reach women in more rural areas.

The Nelson Trust, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire & Somerset

Newly recruited project workers will provide support for female offenders and women at risk of offending with 1:1 counselling and group therapy sessions.

Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner for Cleveland

Partnered with other local services, the PCC will introduce a network of female community hubs – designed as a central point for women being referred at all points of the criminal justice system.

PSS UK, Merseyside

Vital funding will secure the future of this domestic abuse service which had been at risk of closure. The investment will extend services delivered for women with addiction and mental health needs.

PACT, Berkshire

Specialist workers will be funded to deliver support for women who have experienced abuse with a specialised service for those women who have children and need support to live independently.

The Good Loaf, Northamptonshire

A new centre in Kettering will be opened to provide support to women in the north of the county, complementing the service delivered at the Northampton women's centre.

Willowdene Rehabilitation Centre

Funding will extend the residential rehabilitation for women to the West Midlands and will also support the development of new services.

Anawim women's centre, Birmingham

The centre will be able to offer support to high risk female offenders, including 1:1 caseworkers and on-site psychologists available to provide specialist mental health support.

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council

The grant funding will develop a new women's centre in Barnsley including a housing model with emergency bed spaces for women leaving prison.

Trevi House Ltd, Plymouth

Funding will enable the service to purchase a larger premises to support women in Plymouth.