Sacro welcomes the invitation to comment on the draft budget for 2012-13, offering us the opportunity to highlight examples of good practice and suggest option for further cost-effective developments in the justice sector.

We acknowledge the work the Scottish Government, together with statutory and voluntary sector partners, has undertaken to strengthen policy and practice with regard to young people who offend, and welcomes the continued focus on meeting the needs of vulnerable young people alongside those affected by offending behaviour.

We also welcome the positive steps that have been taken to address re-offending and reduce the reliance on short-term custodial sentences. As an active partner in the Reducing Re-offending programme we look forward to assisting in the further development of the community payback order, working in partnership with others to deliver credible community sentences that enable offenders to make a real contribution back to the communities affected by crime, and develop the skills and attitudes that will address their own offending behaviour.

The development of effective early intervention strategies is another area that we are keen to see develop further, allowing effective preventative activity with those at risk of offending. In particular we hope to see the national roll-out of the successful Whole Systems Approach that Sacro is helping to deliver in Aberdeen which is already delivering significant results. The most recent data [September 2011] indicates a 23% reduction in young people committing offences in the previous 12 months.

We are encouraged by the commitment of the Scottish Government to invest in projects that aim to prevent people going to prison, or address the risk of re-offending amongst those already within the criminal justice system. Sacro’s Women’s Mentoring Service delivered support to 42 individuals with £33k funding against the £40k average cost of a prison place. The recognition that investing in rehabilitation services designed to divert adults away from prosecution delivers significant financial benefits is to be welcomed.

We note that the implementation of CPOs and action to addressing the increasing female prison population are identified as investment priorities for the period of the Spending Review. We have also developed a number of specific services designed to meet the particular needs of female offenders, and have welcomed the opportunity to discuss these in detail with the Commission on Female Offenders at recent meetings. Further investment will enable us to offer these existing tailored solutions nationally, as well as develop further alternatives to remand for female offenders.

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1 See attached report from Aberdeen Youth Justice Development Programme
2 See attached submission to the Commission on Female Offenders
As noted above, we are already engaging with local authorities and others to develop services that can deliver the robust community based placements that will support CPOs. Drawing on our experience in working with hard to reach groups, and building successful relationships with service users, we are currently seeing attendance rates of 77% against a national average for all services of this type of 55%. We are pleased to see the continuing commitment of the Scottish Government in supporting this development as evidenced by the maintenance of funding for community justice services in the budget.

The investment in improving the SPS estate, particularly the development of locally based establishments and the improvement of accommodation for female offenders, will improve the welfare of those who receive custodial sentences. We hope that opportunities will also be taken to involve the third sector in the planning of these developments to enable effective engagement with offenders to address their offending behaviour prior to release, as well as ensure effective links are made between them and community based services that can assist in reducing re-offending.

However, as SPS is not a direct commissioner of services, there is a lack of strategic direction to develop links between services within establishments and community provision for offenders on their release. In particular the provision of voluntary throughcare for those serving sentences of less than four years varies significantly across Scotland. In 2010-11 Scotland’s average daily prison population included 3,299 offenders in this category\(^3\).

Sacro has been a partner in the development of the Partnership Initiative, alongside a wide range of other voluntary and statutory agencies including SPS, and we believe the adoption of this model could provide significant benefits. Services that reduce re-offending and, therefore, the need for custodial sentences, will allow the diversion of funding from the prison estate to preventative spend in line with other government priorities.

Tom Halpin
Chief Executive
October 2011

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\(^3\) SPS average daily population 2010-11
Annex 1

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Aberdeen Youth Justice Development Programme</th>
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<tr>
<td>Project Highlight Report</td>
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**RAG Status:**

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**Summary of Overall Progress**

Continuous improvement and sustainability are the significant factors being considered by the programme team and Steering Group. Discussions are ongoing around extending the programme across the Grampian Police Force Area and wider Community Justice Authority. Work is ongoing to scope this out for consideration of the Steering Group.

Data is showing a 23% reduction in young people committing offences between August 2010 and August 2011.

**Lean – no change from previous report**

Benefits of the work to date have been identified and captured within the interim evaluation. Benefits are beginning to emerge of using the ‘Lean’ approach to measure the effectiveness of service delivery. Statistical data alone does not provide the full picture of the effectiveness of services however when considered alongside the ‘value’ services are delivering a more robust picture emerges. This information can be used to assist service redesign and will be used to assist with future sustainability. Work is also ongoing to identify the benefits that might be derived from extending the approach geographically (across Grampian) or in age range (up to 21 years).

**Early Intervention**

Pre-Referral Screening (PRS) is now subject to a further review given that the ‘named person’ as described by GIRFEC, has been agreed and implemented through Education and Health.

Fiscal Work orders have been introduced with 16 and 17 year olds considered a priority group.

The young victims service is now finalised with one member of staff in post and recruitment for CAMH Outreach service underway.
Between 2010/11 (yearly average) and the average in the first quarter of 2011/12 the following trends can be seen.

**Offence referrals**
- Number of children referred to SCRA has fallen by 47%
- Children referred to SCRA not on a Supervision Requirement with a 'No Hearing' decision have fallen from 29 per month to 10 (65%).

**Supervision**
- The average number of all children on supervision under the age of 16 has fallen by 9%.
- The average number of all children on supervision aged 16 or over has increased by 9.7%.

**Diversion from Prosecution**
Only 12% of all the cases discussed at PRS go on to prosecution (out of 327 cases). Approx. 44% of cases are referred to a diversion service.

**Integrated Services**
Intensive Support (with or without a tag) continues to be provided to a number of young people who would otherwise be placed in secure care. Work is ongoing to understand the service delivery implications of this approach to enable service level agreements to be drawn up to ensure continuation of services post March 2012.

Very crude measures show some positive changes in that of the 5 young people subject to IS(M)S:
- Before - total of 132 crimefiles in previous 6 months
- After - total of 37 crimefiles (various timescales)

**Effective Court Case Management**
Along with early diets and the court support worker (who has been involved with more than 100 young people) the alternative to remand service will go live this month.

**Communications / Workforce Development**
Much work will be carried out on the back of the interim evaluation to communicate the benefits of the programme both locally and nationally. Interest has been received from broadcast media.

Further communication events and materials have been delivered/distributed for criminal justice partners including sheriffs, panel members and practitioners.

**Plans for Next Period**

**Lean Sept – Dec 2011**
- Identify impact of increasing remit of programme
- Continue to use Lean approach to measure benefits of services
Early Intervention  Sept – Dec 2011
- Finalise Quality Assurance approach
- Review PRS as part of GIRFEC implementation
- Review Diversion from Prosecution process and police reporting practices.

Integrated Services  Sept – Dec 2011
- Continue to support development of ISS including alternative to remand.
- Review service provision and continue to plan for sustainability.

Effective Court Case Management  Sept – Dec 2011
- Review circumstances in relation to breaches and more effective management of same
- Engage with sheriffs to increase awareness and encourage use of alternatives to custody
- Continue to develop role of Court Support Worker

Communications  Sept - Dec 2011
- Continue to work with strategic partners to raise awareness of the programme benefits locally and nationally
- Finalise local ‘toolkit’ to share good practice.
- Develop service user forum to engage and seek views of young people.
- Review Communications plan and key messages
- Identify success stories and learning points
- Issue newsletter
### Key Risks Level between 16 and 25:

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<th>Probability (1-5)</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Programme Team may be unable to robustly repel any challenge to the validity of our conclusions relating to costs and benefits as a result of concerns identified as to the quality, accuracy and interpretation of the data provided by partners for the following reasons: <strong>Assumptions made</strong> by Capgemini consultants to fill in gaps in required data, unsupported by independent evidence. <strong>Misunderstandings</strong> as to which particular costs are to be included in, or excluded from, the calculation of cost and benefit. <strong>A lack of clarity</strong> as to the interpretation, processing and presentation of the data in the Cost spreadsheet.</td>
<td>Residual 3</td>
<td>Residual 4</td>
<td>PT will collect live data throughout the implementation phases of the project and compare this to the baseline data collected on a regular basis. CG will evaluate the project on an ongoing basis throughout the implementation phases to identify anomalies in the data and conclusions drawn there from.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Partner and stakeholder agencies may not have sufficient type and / or quantity of robust baseline data available to allow effective post implementation comparison and evaluation of the impact of the changes effected by the programme.</td>
<td>Residual 3</td>
<td>Residual 4</td>
<td>CG) to identify the type and quantity of baseline data required from each partner and stakeholder agency to establish a robust baseline. PT &amp; CG to establish the current availability of the required data (hard copy or electronic) in each agency. PT &amp; CG to work with partner and stakeholder agencies to overcome shortfalls in available baseline data. PT &amp; CG to work with partners and stakeholders to establish data capture procedures to provide data for post implementation evaluation of the changes. Collect and process live data and compare to baseline to identify significant anomalies.</td>
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### Key Issues Level 4 and above: :

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#### Project Costs:

N.B. Variance is equal to the (Baseline budget) – (spent so far + Forecast to the end). Project is Red if variance exceeds the 7.5% Tolerance level.

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**PROGRESS ON COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY:**

- 5 x Communications newsletters issued
- Stakeholder map prepared
- 3 x Awareness raising events delivered
- Engagement plan finalised
- Integrating programme communications into wider Integrated Children's Services agenda to support sustainability.
- Communications included in partner websites and newsletters
Annex 2

The Right Hon Dame Elish Angiolini DBE QC
Area 3 G South
Victoria Quay
Edinburgh
EH6 6QQ

20 September 2011

Dear Dame Angiolini

Commission on Women Offenders

Thank you for inviting me to attend a session with the Commission on Women Offenders this week. In preparation for that meeting, I thought it might be useful to provide you and other Commission members with the following information.

In the recent past, Sacro submitted evidence to the Scottish Parliament’s Equal Opportunities Committee for its inquiry into female offenders in the criminal justice system. Sacro’s evidence described the range of personal and social problems many female offenders face and noted some of the structural challenges that existed too. In the detailed framework provided, Sacro proposed a number of actions which were considered important in addressing these difficulties and in helping reduce the number of women being imprisoned⁴. Notably, these included:

- the development of a coherent strategic approach to women offenders across Scotland’s Community Justice Authority areas;
- more integrated service provision between the Scottish Prison Service and its partners in local authorities, health services and housing;
- an increase in alternatives to custodial remand and a better geographical spread across Scotland of pre-prosecution options (for example, bail supervision and arrest referral schemes respectively);
- the extension of supported accommodation services;
- more bespoke criminal justice social work interventions for women offenders (as opposed to women being made to fit into services that are delivered mostly to male offenders);
- the development of mentoring and volunteering approaches;

⁴ The evidence submitted to the Equal Opportunities Committee is attached to this letter.
• a focused early intervention strategy within youth justice, which would help identify and promote work with young women at risk of entering the adult system;

• further consideration of plans to hold female prisoners in local prisons, as opposed to them being solely held at HMP&YOI Cornton Vale.

Sacro believes that the proposals made to the Equal Opportunities Committee remain valid and necessary. There has been some progress across Scotland on the above, though arguably there is still much to be done.

Sacro has extensive experience of working with men and women who are involved in the criminal justice system, both pre- and post prosecution. This letter provides a brief outline of the services available and also sets out the work that Sacro is doing to try to assist women in stopping offending and living law-abiding lives.

Services available

Sacro provides a range of services for offenders, some of which are generic to both sexes and others which specifically target women. These services are:

• bail supervision (generic);
• supported accommodation (generic);
• housing support (generic);
• intensive support and monitoring services (generic);
• throughcare (generic);
• groupwork (generic);
• restorative justice (generic);
• Whole Systems Approach (generic);
• placements for those on community payback orders (generic);
• women’s mentoring services (females only);
• Another Way (females only);
• Willow project (females only).

Councils fund many of these services though the National Health Service, charities and Sacro itself have also provided funds to establish and develop certain services.

Services specifically for women

Currently Sacro delivers mentoring services for women offenders in two community justice authority (CJA) areas: Lanarkshire and Fife & Forth Valley CJs. Sacro is also beginning a six-month pilot women’s mentoring service in the Glasgow CJA area on 1 October 2011. In the Lothian & Borders CJA area, Sacro provides/is part of the Willow and Another Way projects, which work with women at risk of becoming/or involved in offending and the sex industry.
Women’s mentoring

On receipt of a referral, Sacro staff meet with the prospective female mentee. They will carry out an assessment of the woman’s needs and then, depending on the outcome of that assessment, a suitable mentor is matched. The mentor and the female mentee (and the local authority supervising officer if there is one) design an action plan, which sets out the goals the woman wishes to achieve and the assistance required from the mentor. In many cases, the mentor undertakes such tasks as accompanying the women to key appointments with health professionals; providing an advocacy role in dealing with other agencies such as housing services; signposting the woman to other appropriate community based resources such as drug/alcohol services; and providing emotional support to deal with personal or relationship difficulties.

The key strength in women’s mentoring services is the one-to-one support offered. It allows women to build a positive and trusting relationship with a mentor, who will work with them on important personal goals. Women who have engaged with these services have told Sacro staff of their increased self confidence and self esteem. Many women have also noted higher levels of contact with those agencies tasked with resettling them back into the community after a period of imprisonment. In addition, by training members of the local community to be volunteer mentors, Sacro is helping build a greater awareness and appreciation of the real problems facing many female offenders and what can be done to help them. The skills that volunteers develop as mentors also contribute to the capacity of communities to deal with social difficulties.

Willow Project

Willow is a partnership project between NHS Lothian, City of Edinburgh Council and Sacro to address the social, health and welfare needs of women in the criminal justice system. The project is presently located within Sacro premises in Edinburgh. Willow aims to improve women’s health, wellbeing and safety; enhance women’s access to services; and reduce their offending behaviour. Willow offers a wide range of services to women aged over eighteen who are resident in Edinburgh or planning to return there from custody. Women attend a group based programme two days per week for up to six months and also have a key worker. The programme includes:

- Connections - promoting self-esteem, self-confidence and a positive self identify
- Opportunities to participate in community activities and develop supportive social networks
- Survive & Thrive - learning to cope with the effects of trauma and abuse
- Art Therapy
- Guest speakers (e.g. on substance use, women’s rights in custody, sexual health)
- Education and training opportunities
- Food and nutrition
• Physical health check and support to access primary and secondary care services
• Health promotion programmes – smoking cessation, exercise, sexual health etc
• Programmes are based on a woman-centred, adult education approach which builds confidence.

Willow is still going through a period of development. Sacro’s experience has shown that there is a need for stable, suitable premises where the holistic needs of women offenders can be addressed. Moreover, there is the potential to promote Willow as a first, preferred service provider rather than one that is used when all other avenues have been exhausted. Sacro believes that although there are difficulties in getting some service users to attend, there are really good outcomes for them once they do.

Another Way Service

The Another Way service was established in 2005, initially as a one-year pilot employing a part time worker whose job was to encourage drug-using street sex workers to engage with drug treatment and support services. In 2007, Another Way became part of the Edinburgh & Midlothian Arrest Referral Service and funding became available to employ a full time worker.

Since then, the service has developed but its fundamental aims remain the same:

• to help women who have been involved in street sex work or who are at risk of street work get access to appropriate support from drug treatment services and alcohol services, if required;
• to improve the health, safety and welfare of the women concerned by reducing the pressure on them to engage in street sex work;
• to reduce the number of prosecutions for street sex work-related offences.

Sacro staff work closely with other professionals, for example, health, social work, mental health staff, the police and housing providers. Together they have helped many women:

• get in contact with a doctor;
• access testing for blood borne viruses, sexually transmitted diseases, cervical cancer
• get in touch with needle exchange programmes;
• deal with housing, employment, benefits, employment difficulties;
• tackle addiction difficulties;
• address social care matters.

Sacro and its partners believe that the Another Way service provides a valuable resource for those women with addiction difficulties who are at risk of being involved in sex work.
Throughcare Travel Service

Sacro provides regular transport to Scottish prisons and the State Hospital at Carstairs to enable prisoners, patients and their families and friends, to maintain contact that will help sustain family relationships and facilitate the prisoners’ re-integration to the community on release. Experienced volunteer drivers provide scheduled services, usually in their own cars, to each destination. Most services operate on at least monthly frequency although this is dependent on the level of demand. Unscheduled services can also be provided in special circumstances or where there is a perceived need for them. These services are intended for people with special needs who cannot or do not wish to travel on the scheduled services. Bookings for these services can be made through the Sacro Glasgow and Edinburgh offices.

Sacro staff also provide directions to prisons, contacts and procedures for visiting.

I trust this information is useful and I look forward to meeting you and other Commission members this week.

Tom Halpin
Chief Executive
Sacro's evidence to the Scottish Parliament's Equal Opportunities Committee inquiry into female offenders in our criminal justice system

Introduction

Sacro welcomes the Equal Opportunities Committee’s decision to inquire into this matter. Sacro also welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to help the Committee carry out its inquiry.

For well over a decade, successive Governments in Scotland have sought to identify ways to deal more effectively with the problem of female offenders and, in particular, the steadily increasing female prison population. Statistical evidence indicates that in the ten year period from 1998 to 2007/8, the female prison population has increased by 87%, more than 4 times more than that of the male prison population (20%).

Groups such as the Inter-Agency Forum on Women Offenders and the Ministerial Group on Women Offenders and reports such as “A Safer Way” and “A Better Way” have led to the introduction of innovative new measures to address the problem. There is also a general consensus within Scotland’s criminal justice system that it should be feasible to reduce the number of women in our prisons. But despite this commitment and these efforts, the problem has remained intractable. On average, during 2007/08 the daily female prison population in Scotland was 371.

Sacro is encouraged that the Equal Opportunity Committee will be able to bring a new perspective to the matter.

Sacro’s views

As the main criminal justice voluntary sector organisation in Scotland, Sacro’s expertise and experience lies mainly in the provision of community justice services for those offenders sentenced to community sentences and for those resettling in communities following custodial sentences. Over the past ten years, the use of community sentences has also increased, accounting for 13% of all sentences. However of this, female offenders accounted for only 15% of all community sentences imposed.

Whilst the scope of the present inquiry has an emphasis on assessing the prison experience for, and background of, female offenders, particularly the extent to which prison helps to prevent women from re-offending, Sacro’s view is that the experience of prison and its impact on reducing reoffending should not be considered in isolation but should be part of a wider inquiry which includes the potential of community sentences to offer more effective ways to deal with the majority of female offenders in order to reduce reoffending. Thus the focus of our submission is on the potential of community justice services.

Profile of female prisoners

There is a wealth of evidence from previous studies and research on the profile of women offenders and this will be known to the Committee. Perhaps too much emphasis has been given in the past to analysing the profile of women offenders
rather than devising solutions to the problem. We now know that women offenders have cumulative social and emotional disadvantage. Most women prisoners are persistent offenders on short sentences who are involved mainly in acquisitive crime and whilst the number of women involved in violent crime has increased in recent years, the number still accounts for a relatively small proportion overall. Thus the types and length of sentences for which female offenders are imprisoned demonstrates ‘low’ risk to communities, however, research indicates that the personal, social and economic costs of women being imprisoned are immense. Most women do not therefore pose a threat to the public and given the problems which result from imprisonment, Sacro questions the need for its use in such cases.

The criminal justice system continues to struggle to deal effectively with the many women offenders who have multiple disadvantages combined with chaotic lifestyles, drug addiction and who rely on prostitution to feed their habit.

But it is valid to ask why women who offend should be treated differently to their male counterparts. Research tells us that the experience of prison has a different impact on women than men, that the impact on their families, especially children, is more acute, building up problems for future generations, and that the reasons women desist from offending is also different and depends more on building stable relationships and providing structures and reliable alternatives to often chaotic lifestyles.

It is also worth noting the large number of women who are remanded to prison rather than bailed in the community and the potential which must exist to make a significant impact on female prison numbers if there were more effective ways of dealing with women awaiting trial.

Women tend to enter the criminal justice system at a lower level than men but then, because of their chaotic lifestyles and failure to meet the conditions of their bail orders or community orders, they can escalate up through the tariff level more quickly so that the courts find themselves running out of options other than imprisonment. This suggests that the criminal justice system needs to ensure both that there are sufficient community options at the lower tariff level to hold women there and also that there are robust but non-custodial ways to deal constructively with breaches. The longer that women can be held on community sentences, the better the chances that the factors behind their offending behaviour can be addressed and that they can move on to lead more useful lives for themselves, their families and their communities.

**Existing range of community options**

Sacro supports the conclusions of last year’s Prison Commission report and the subsequent response from the Scottish Government, with its proposals for a reduction in the number of prison sentences of 6 months or less, for a system of fair, fast and flexible community sentences and for the establishment of a Sentencing Council. These reforms have the potential to reduce the number of women being imprisoned.
But there is also much that can be done without new legislation. The Justice Committee’s report on community sentencing in 2003 concluded that Scotland already had an excellent range of community options and that the emphasis should not now be on creating more and more options but rather on simplifying and improving the quality of those already available to our courts. In particular, Sacro’s view is that we should be investing in the quality and effectiveness of the main community sentences of probation and community service, albeit in their new proposed guise of the Community Payback sentence.

This is not easy in a time of financial constraint but, remembering that every prison place costs around £40,000 per annum, the plan to reduce short term sentences could release resources to be reinvested in community justice services and in those other community services which women offenders need, such as access to health, mental health, drug treatment and debt counselling services. This would represent a better return on the high level of investment than the current outcome of the revolving door of repeat petty offending. Sacro would certainly want to offer its support in redesigning services for women offenders, with a move away from a heavy reliance on those based within institutions to those based in the community which enable women to start to begin to lead more normal lifestyles.

A possible framework for the future?

Thus Sacro looks not to legislation to solve the problem of the increasing number of women in prison in Scotland but to improving the way that services are made available, and work with, these often disadvantaged and damaged women. Because of the relatively small numbers of female offenders compared to male offenders, services for the women are too often, for practical reasons, designed around the needs of men with women fitting in where and when they can, without adaptation to their needs. This ignores the profile of female offenders and what we know about the reasons that they are likely to desist from offending.

A new framework might therefore include:

- A new strategic approach for female offenders with each of the 8 Community Justice Authorities (CJAs) preparing a strategy which reflects the issues encountered in their local areas, including the pattern of sentencing by the courts, and which sets out a plan to reduce the number of women imprisoned from their area over time, with measurable milestones.
- The CJAs to work with the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) and local authority criminal justice social work services to redesign joined-up criminal justice interventions which are women (and children) focused in line with their strategies. The CJAs also to work with their wider partners – health services, employment agencies, housing - to improve access for women to the universal community services which women so often have difficulty in accessing.
- The CJAs to commission the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) to undertake short studies of cohorts of women prisoners from each of the CJA areas to identify where community services failed to address the underlying issues which led these women into offending behaviour and prison and to reflect the unmet need in their strategies.
The development of better and more widely available alternatives to custodial remand to reduce the large number of women held on remand, with more bail supervision schemes, the provision of drug treatment as a condition of bail and better access to supported accommodation services where this would persuade the court to opt for bail rather than remand.

A better geographical spread of options pre-prosecution and at the lower end of the sentencing tariff, such as arrest referral schemes, diversion schemes, structured deferred sentences and more constructive ways of dealing with breaches, so that women receive more support early in their criminal careers with the objective of stopping their rapid rise up the sentencing tariff toward custody before criminal behaviour becomes ingrained.

Court social workers specifically trained in the criminogenic needs of women offenders who can prepare pre-sentence reports for the courts which provide realistic community options to address their offending behaviour and their social problems.

The provision of more supported accommodation services – such as supported flats - designed around the needs of women offenders to provide alternative accommodation to prison for the courts. These could offer services, based around the concepts developed in, and the lessons learned from, the 218 centre in Glasgow, but at more affordable costs. The small numbers of women offenders spread across Scotland would tend to rule out more 218 centres on the basis of their cost-effectiveness and low occupancy rates but similar services could be provided in other ways.

Community sentences to find ways to operate women specific groups so that their offending behaviour can be properly addressed. Many of these women will display multiple symptoms of deprivation but they have offended and so, whilst research shows that they are likely to respond better to interventions which address all of the problems they face in their lives, it is important not to lose the focus on their offending behaviour, nor to excuse it, nor to ignore the views of their victims.

But whilst retaining a focus on offending behaviour, success in moving them away from offending is likely to be more successful when criminal justice interventions assist the women to resolve the other deficits in their lives. In particular, there should be a focus on helping them improve their practical life skills, such as cooking, parenting, managing money. These would be the first steps in a journey which might then lead them back into the labour market.

Women offenders have different personal and social needs to their male counterparts. Scotland is well placed with its tradition of social work as an integral part of the criminal justice system to address both the offending behaviour and the general welfare needs of many of these women. It is particularly important to create constructive relationships and to engage with the women. Many suffer from low esteem, have been subject to abuse and have a tendency to self-harm. One option is to provide each woman with her own personal worker to take responsibility for linking her, and negotiating access for her, to the services which she needs. This need not be the supervising social worker but might be modelled on the European concept of social pedagogues, which promotes a multi-disciplinary approach, integrating elements of care, therapy and creative activities. The aim should be to make a gradual transfer from dependency to long term social supports in the community.
• The support network for female offenders could be extended by setting up a mentoring service where volunteers from the community – the churches showed some interest in this proposal in the past – provide positive role models and offer social support.

• In the past few years, the rise in the female prison population has been steeper than the rise for the male prison population. As well as directing attention at the current population of female offenders, it is important to take action to prevent more young women entering the criminal justice system. There are general risk factors which indicate the young women at risk of entering a criminal career, such as early use of illegal substances, poor behaviour and attendance at school, poor parental supervision, a poor relationship with the mother, criminal and substance abusing parents and early onset of offending behaviour. There should be an early intervention strategy within the youth justice system to identify and work intensively with young women who display these risks.

• In terms of resettlement after a custodial sentence, there is an argument for women being held in local prisons rather than in one national facility (at Cornton Vale). This would help make links with local services in the period up to their release. It would also assist in maintaining family relations which are critical in their desistance. However, this is a complex issues and there is a risk that a decision to break up the female prison population between local prisons would result in the fragmentation of the good work being done at Cornton Vale where the focus is on women, thus replicating the problems being faced in local authority criminal justice social work services in providing targeted services for women.

Conclusion

Sacro made women offenders one of its priority groups in its current strategic plan and offers the above evidence in the hope that it will help inform the deliberations of the Committee. Sacro strongly believes that by redesigning sentencing structures appropriate to the level and nature of crime committed and developing holistic interventions that focus on personal and lifestyle issues of female offenders whilst ensuring that the needs of victims are recognised and supported, we can as a society reduce the social, personal and economic costs of female offending behaviour.

Sacro
2009
Annex 3

Prison population (Scotland): 2001-02 to 2010-11

Year

2001-02
2002-03
2003-04
2004-05
2005-06
2006-07
2007-08
2008-09
2009-10
2010-11

Average Daily Population

0
1,000
2,000
3,000
4,000
5,000
6,000
7,000
8,000
9,000

Legend:

- Remand
- Less than 4 Years
- 4 Years or over (including life and recalls to custody)