

Dear Nicola

Following your call for evidence for the APPG inquiry on sentencing of women Willowdene Rehabilitation Centre would like to draw your attention to the following.

Willowdene Rehabilitation Centre in 2013 in partnership with the then West Mercia Probation Trust, now Warwickshire and West Mercia CRC, developed a residential alternative to custody for female offenders. This residential intervention was specifically designed to prevent women on suspended sentences being sent directly to prison as magistrates and judges felt there was no suitable alternative. The Willowdene alternative to custody intervention was widely promoted to magistrates forums and district judges to ensure they were familiar with the therapeutic approach adopted, the deprivation of liberties (resident for 7 weeks), skills training and purposeful use of time. This intervention was carefully monitored and outcome data was reported back quarterly to magistrates. The success of the programme resulted in magistrates across the area adopting 'think woman, think Willowdene'. Due to the lack of female sentencing options and the success, the alternative to custody is a very well used option for sentencers. During the last 18 months magistrates and crown court judges have adjourned court if NPS court report writers have not proposed Willowdene's alternative to custody such is the profile the intervention has. The remit of the intervention has been broadened so that more females can access the provision. This includes access for any female on the custody threshold, access for women on release from prison and support for women living chaotic lifestyles in the community. The intervention over a 3 year study was 3 times more effective at reducing reoffending when compared to prison. During the last 12 months to meet the demands of female service users across our region, Willowdene now offers substance misuse detox as part of the programme.

Now in its fifth year the intervention is recognised widely across the region and is regularly used as a sentencing option. In order to maintain its profile Willowdene continues to promote the outcomes and interventions to ensure female service users have the best possible opportunity to reduce reoffending. All of the nine pathways to reducing reoffending are addressed in a one stop shop approach on site which leads to life transformation opportunities. Willowdene has hosted, and continues to host, magistrates and crown court judges on open days and graduations providing case studies and opportunities to speak to residential students face to face. Willowdene and the WWM CRC have been working closely with the NPS and have achieved a successful pathway for NPS female service users to access provision through the rate card. At the point of writing this the residential programme is full with a waiting list.

In summary, sentencers are keen to use alternatives to prison for females in our area. It is important that NPS court report writers recommend alternatives to custody as magistrates often follow the recommendation. However, through strong promotion and partnership with sentencers, even where it has not been proposed, sentencers feel empowered and have the knowledge and proof that the intervention is successful and therefore will make the recommendation as an alternative to custody.

With the split of the probation service through TR NPS female service users, up until recently, did not have an equitable opportunity to access the alternative to custody. Partnership working and awareness raising has resulted with the NPS, WWM CRC and Willowdene having a clear and simple pathway for female service users which is being

fully utilised. Whilst the intervention receives funding through a current ISPA and rate card for NPS as well as charitable funds and social enterprise activities, Willowdene is very aware that the current ISPA ends in July 2018 and is currently in negotiations with the CRC for continuation of funding.

Willowdene is happy to provide any further information including case studies so please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Regards

Dr Matthew Home

Willowdene Rehabilitation