Below are selected paragraphs from an email from Scott Cowap JP, Chairman of the Greater Manchester Magistrates’ Bench Problem Solving Panel, who is responsible for the Problem Solving Courts in the Greater Manchester Judicial area.¹

[…] If it’s still possible to submit evidence, perhaps I could mention that we currently run Problem Solving Courts specifically for women offenders in the Manchester Courts?

Our associated Courthouse, in Stockport, also runs a similar Problem Solving Court which, for the time being, includes both male and female offenders. Since various court mergers, however, it’s likely that Stockport will continue to only deal with women, as in Manchester.

Manchester, and Salford before it, has run this court for a number of years, dealing only with women, primarily due to limited resources on its inception. Bury court, which also ran a Problem Solving Court has recently merged with Manchester bringing both its Magistrates and current offenders to this Court.

The court sits every two weeks in Manchester, alternating with the Drug Review Court, sitting on Wednesday mornings. Women offenders who are at serious risk of custody, or of having a high Community sentence imposed are sentenced in the other courts with a recommendation in the pre-sentence report that they attend reviews in the Problem Solving Court.

They then appear on a six weekly review to measure their progress with the various Agencies to which they have been referred. Wherever possible, we try to ensure that the same Bench of Magistrates reviews that individual in an effort to build-up a relationship. We believe this is very important and has borne fruit in the success we believe the Problem Solving Court has achieved in lowering re-offending rates.

¹ Some sentences have been edited out for relevance and to protect people’s personal details.