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UNLOCKING VALUE:

How we all benefit from investing in alternatives to prison for women offenders

Measuring What Matters | 3

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nef (the new economics foundation) is a registered charity founded in 1986 by the leaders of The Other Economic Summit (TOES), which forced issues such as international debt onto the agenda of the G7/G8 summit meetings. It has taken a lead in helping establish new coalitions and organisations such as the Jubilee 2000 debt campaign; the Ethical Trading Initiative; the UK Social Investment Forum; and new ways to measure social and economic well-being.

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Executive Summary

nef's research found that for every pound invested in support-focused alternatives to prison, £14 worth of social value is generated to women and their children, victims and society generally over ten years.

Not since the mid–19th century has our prison system held as many women as it does today. Many are repeat petty offenders, trapped in a cycle of deprivation, disadvantage, drug abuse and crime that the prison system is conspicuously failing to break.

This report from **nef** (the new economics foundation) highlights how a criminal justice system focused on short–term cost control and narrow re–offending targets is letting women offenders down and costing more in the longer term

Using ***Social Return on Investment*** (SROI) analysis, **nef** has examined the costs and long–term benefits associated with the work of two centres providing an alternative to prison in Glasgow and Worcester. It concludes that support–focused ***community penalties*** involving high–quality facilities such as these are a more cost–effective option than imprisonment for non–violent women offenders.

Unlocking Value urges policy makers to ensure that sentencing does more to help overcome the problems of women offenders and meet their needs. It also calls for a more broad–based, sophisticated and balanced approach to measuring the impact of imprisonment and other sentencing options so that public money can be invested in a better–informed and more effective way of addressing the root causes of crime.

This report was produced under the umbrella of **nef**'s Measuring What Matters programme. Direct financial costs and immediate savings have a tendency to drive policy decisions, whereas broader economic and social costs are not always taken into account. This means that policy makers are often taking decisions on the basis of partial information. In an attempt to get to the heart of what really matters in the sentencing of non–violent women offenders this research values the hidden costs and benefits of community penalties.

Prison isn't working

For women offenders in particular, prison isn't working. The women's prison population has doubled since 1997, having grown more than twice as fast as that of men over the same period. There has also been a sharp increase in reconviction rates.

Most women offenders leave prison still encumbered by the debt, mental health, or substance abuse problems with which they entered. It is no surprise that the majority go on to re–offend.

Women's prisons have some of the worst outcomes in the criminal justice system. In England in 2007, for example, women represented 6 per cent of the prison population but 49 per cent of incidents of serious self–harm.

Social Return on Investment

SROI analysis is a process for understanding, measuring and reporting on the social, environmental and economic value created by an intervention, and provides a stakeholder–led framework for measuring the long–term change created by public policy.

Community Penalties

A penalty which allows the offender to retain her liberty by complying with the requirements of a court order and being supervised by an appropriately authorised official employed by, or acting on behalf of, a probation service. Support–focussed penalties are holistic services that also meet the offenders particular needs, such as substance use, money management, education/training etc.

Stalling on solutions

In 2007 the Corston Review, commissioned by the government, proposed fundamental reform. Its recommendations focused on improving sentencing, providing more and better community punishments and developing a network of support and supervision centres. It also recommended reconfiguring the prison estate to include smaller units with improved healthcare that are reserved for those women whose offending is so serious or violent that there can be no alternative to custody.

In the light of Corston's recommendations, the government has committed itself to reducing the numbers of women sentenced to prison by investing in alternatives. Although it has accepted 40 of 43 recommendations it has stalled on implementing them. While ministers debate the costs of funding these, the inappropriate use of custodial sentences continues.

This inadequate response flies in the face of cross–party support for Corston's recommendations and 86 per cent public support for local support and supervision centres for women who offend.

Missing what matters

Measurement of performance in the penal system has become increasingly associated with a narrow agenda of controlling direct costs and meeting headline targets on re–offending. But without a strong evidence base on the rehabilitative impact of different types of interventions, it is difficult to understand what value is being delivered for the billions of pounds being spent in the criminal justice system.

There are a number of problems with current measurement and evaluation methods, including the following:

- Measuring levels of re–offending is considered so important that other important outcomes for society and for offenders themselves are being neglected.
- Women make up a small proportion of the offender population, so measures have been developed mainly with male offenders in mind and without taking women's distinctive offending profile and needs into account.
- The OASys (Offender Assessment System) information programme does not track the progress of most non–violent women offenders because they usually serve shorter sentences. OASys is only used for those serving a sentence of one year or more.
- Measurement focuses mainly on where interventions fail, rather than measuring any successes in enabling offenders to lead fulfilling, law–abiding lives. This means it is very difficult to build up an understanding of why some people in the system succeed and to adapt services accordingly.
- There is too much focus on ***outputs*** and not enough on ***outcomes***. For example, performance measures set out in the National Reducing Re–offending Delivery Plan include outputs such as the percentage of prison drug treatment programmes completed, and the number of prisoners signing voluntary drug testing compacts. But these ***indicators*** do not measure the level of harm reduction associated with treatment and testing programmes – i.e. whether such interventions are effective.
- Programmes do not last long enough to be influenced by data from evaluations, which can therefore only look at the effectiveness of processes and outputs.

Outputs

A policy intervention usually results in something demonstrable or countable right afterwards. Outputs are usually finite; items created (such as jobs) or people trained. While outputs are often the first step in creating the longer–term change at which policy is aimed, they are not enough by themselves to create that change.

Outcomes

The change that results from your organisation's activity – for people communities, the economy, or aspects of the natural or built environment. They come either wholly or in part as a result of the organisation's actions. Outcomes can be negative as well as positive and measuring them is the only way that you can know for sure that change has taken place.

Indicators

An indicator is a piece of information that helps us determine whether or not change has taken place. Indicators matter because they are a way of knowing if an outcome has taken place. There can be indicators of outcomes and outputs but only outcomes indicators are appropriate to measure change.

The benefits of support–focused community penalties

For this research **nef** interviewed women sentenced to community penalties at two facilities – centre 218 in Glasgow and the Asha centre in Worcester. It also interviewed women serving custodial sentences at Bronzefield prison in Middlesex.

Using data from a range of authoritative and statistically robust sources, the researchers plotted the financial implications – over periods of 10 and 20 years – of giving women support–focused community sentences instead of sending them to prison.

The research found that:

- For every pound invested in support–focused alternatives to prison, £14 worth of social value is generated to women and their children, victims and society generally over ten years
- If alternatives to prison were to achieve an additional reduction of just 6 per cent in re–offending, the state would recoup the investment required to achieve this in just one year
- The long–run value of these benefits is in excess of £100 million over a ten–year period.

As well as providing new evidence on the costs of imprisoning non–violent women offenders, **nef** analysed the adverse consequences of mothers' imprisonment for their children. It found that:

- Imprisoning mothers for non–violent offences carries a cost to children and the state of more than £17 million over a ten–year period
- The main social cost incurred by the children of imprisoned mothers – and by the state in relation to these children – results from the increased likelihood of their becoming 'NEET' (Not in Education, Employment or Training)
- Additional savings can be made with non–custodial sentences because of the reduced likelihood of children becoming problem drug users, or becoming involved in crime, if their mothers avoid prison.

In interviews at Asha and Centre 218, women reported much higher levels of confidence and self–esteem than the women interviewed at Bronzefield. At Centre 218, 82 per cent of women reported an increase in confidence and self–esteem, compared to 50 per cent at the Asha Centre and only 36 per cent at Bronzefield.

The benefit of such changes in the outlook of women offenders should not be underestimated, although further research is required on the link between improvements in well–being and other outcomes such as reoffending.

Conclusions and recommendations

This analysis shows that there are huge benefits from investing in alternatives to prison. Even small reductions in re–offending translate into significant savings.

Because they are convicted for relatively petty crimes and do not pose a serious threat to society, and because of their unique role as primary carers, non–violent women are a special case. Support–focused alternatives that deal with the underlying causes of women's offending could be more effective than prison sentences in helping them lead law–abiding lives.

The government has committed itself to reducing the numbers of women in prison by investing in alternatives. This commitment should include gathering the kinds of data required to ensure informed public and political debate and make sound judgements about returns on public investment.

Our three key recommendations for action are:

- Measurement systems need to be put in place to enable a fuller analysis of the costs and benefits of different decisions

Better information about effectiveness is vitally important. Only with a stronger system of measurement can we can track the things that matter to people over the long term. What is ultimately needed for non–violent women offenders is a personalised assessment system that identifies appropriate interventions and tracks how they are progressing against important outcome indicators. This needs to be accompanied by system–level measures on each of the outcomes developed with women at an individual level so that policy makers and sentencing authorities can make informed decisions about sentencing and resource allocation. The system should recognise that the things that help offenders improve their lives ultimately benefit the public and victims.

- The government should change how it thinks about investment

This research demonstrates the value of an expanded, more accurate assessment of costs and benefits that should be considered by ministers. Policy making is currently disproportionately concerned with the direct costs of prisons and other penal facilities, neglecting consideration of the wider economic, social and environmental costs and benefits of government interventions. The Treasury should invest in research using approaches such as SROI, which could help inform sentencing authorities about the knock–on effects and long–term consequences of the decisions they take. In particular, the Treasury must strengthen its approach to valuing social outcomes. One approach worth examining is the model of the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) in the health sector. Although limited, in that only looks at value to the state, it does make difficult decisions on resource allocation based on a richer vein of information and the entire process is more transparent that what we see in other areas of social care.

- Sentencing for non–violent women must do more to meet their needs

There is a need to ensure that sentences are used appropriately and are relevant to individuals' needs. If more meaningful cost data can be generated, these should be provided to the sentencing authorities. It is essential that those handing down sentences have access to information that ensures they know not only what the direct cost of a sentence will be but also what the broader costs and benefits will be for women offenders, their families and their communities. It is both feasible and desirable to provide sentencing authorities with cost information on factors such as the cost to family members or local authorities of caring for a female offender's children if she is imprisoned.

Introduction

‘The prisons are full; the courts are crowded, the officers of the law are busy, and there seems to be no material decrease in crime. It is impossible to make the penalty horrible enough to lessen crime…The same faces appear again and again at the bar. Let us remember that criminals are produced by conditions, and let us do what we can to change the conditions…’

Robert Green Ingersoll[1]

It is over a hundred years since these words were spoken by the American political reformer, and the message is as relevant today as then. The UK continues to lock up more and more people, yet any firm link between crime rates and rates of imprisonment is unproven[2] and there is no conclusive evidence that incarceration changes the behaviour of persistent offenders.[3,4] ,

Other research suggests that prison offers no more of a deterrent than community–based sanctions,[5] and this has been validated by 2008 research on those serving short sentences.[6] In addition, the rate of increase in the cost of financing the system has risen,[7] making it a politically contentious subject in recent times.[8]

Prisons are a requisite part of the criminal justice system. Even for non–violent offenders they can be places where positive activities take place, such as detoxification of addicted prisoners.[9] Nonetheless, this research takes as its starting point the perspective that an expanding prison population is not a sign of healthy national progress. It seeks to build on what is already known about the relative costs and benefits of alternatives to prison, especially for women convicted of minor offences. It aims to contribute to the debate by examining the crucial question of how investment in the system can best be used to enable people to live law–abiding lives.

To conduct our research we have used the SROI methodology, which puts a monetary value on the social, environmental and economic outcomes achieved for a given investment.[10] In this study we apply SROI to one group of offenders (non–violent women), and seek to demonstrate how such an approach to criminal justice policy could promote a new understanding of efficiency and value for money in this policy area.

Non–violent women offenders are an important group to consider for this type of comparative analysis. Rates of imprisonment have risen significantly in recent years among this group. Moreover, increased use of community sentences is a feasible alternative sentencing policy option for this group, and one that potentially offers greater overall net benefits than short prison sentences.

Much of the rationale for using community penalties for non–violent women offenders extends to men. But women offenders differ in some important ways, including the nature and extent of their relationships with children.

Over 60 per cent of women in prison are mothers, and around 45 per cent of these had dependent children living with them at the time of their imprisonment. An estimated 18,000 children in the UK are separated from their mothers each year through imprisonment.[11] This is less likely to be the case for male offenders because comparatively few have been primary carers, though we acknowledge that children are also affected by being separated from their fathers. This research will demonstrate the considerable long–term effects of separating mothers and dependent children in terms of social costs that reach far beyond the criminal justice system.

The broader context – inequality and crime

It is increasingly recognised that to restrict an analysis of crime or punishment to the criminal justice system alone is inappropriate. Few discussions of the impact of interventions take place without reference to broader societal influences and impacts. More research now exists on the relationship between economic circumstances and crime, and indeed economic systems and crime.[12] While it is difficult to establish a causal relationship between people's material circumstances and propensity to offend, a number of studies have found that offenders are more likely to come from areas with high levels of deprivation,[13] and that the majority of prisoners could be described as poor upon entering prison.[14,15] Across the world where high levels of inequality are found, so too are large prison populations.

What is still unclear is whether, as some argue,[16,17] inequality leads to crime, or whether unequal societies tend to adopt more punitive criminal justice policies. As wealth disparities increase, for example, harsher punishments for 'deviants' can become more publicly acceptable or even desired. Either way, the two phenomena certainly co–exist. Women incidentally hold fewer roles of power and influence and are twice as likely as men to live in poverty;[18] with recent data suggesting that their economic and social position is deteriorating relative to men.[19]

As fear of crime among the wealthy has risen alongside inequality and rates of incarceration, the likelihood of the richest 20 per cent of the population being murdered has actually been falling. Among the poorest 10 per cent, however, people are 182 per cent more likely than average to be murdered.[20] Fear of crime may also be increasing among low–income groups but its rise amongst the wealthy is disproportionate to the risk of becoming a victim.

These inequalities are even starker when we take into consideration differences in the levels of crime reporting. Most crimes go unreported, with recent research suggesting that as few as 3 per cent are ever prosecuted.[21] The same research has demonstrated that most crimes dealt with by the system in the UK are minor offences or 'victimless' crimes, while much more serious offences – corporate crime, domestic violence and sexual assault – are rarely tackled. The researchers argue that because the criminal justice system is set up to target only certain types of crimes and individuals, it tends to perpetuate existing imbalances of power. Not only are rates of crime and imprisonment arguably driven by economic conditions, then, but the system itself may exacerbate existing economic inequalities.

If political economy helps explain how we got to where we are, then some of the solutions will also be economic. There is evidence, for example that the introduction of the minimum wage reduced crime in the areas where it had the most impact.[22] It is clear, however, that we also need to find better ways to deploy resources within the system to support rehabilitation and enable people to live law–abiding lives. What is also implied – but beyond the scope of this research to study in more detail – is the potential impact that a smaller prison estate will have on outcomes for all prisoners. If fewer resources were needed by big prisons, it would free up capacity in the system that would allow a greater focus on rehabilitative activities for offenders.

Aims and report structure

This report is based on research conducted under the umbrella of the **nef** programme Measuring What Matters (see box). Our aim is to contribute positively to the broad debate about the distribution of sentencing options across the criminal justice system. The methods we have used to measure value will are intended to help to encourage a more sophisticated, balanced and meaningful measurement of effectiveness in future policy making. With a burgeoning prison population the question of how to make effective use of public money is more pertinent than ever.

Measuring What Matters

Measuring What Matters is a **nef** programme investigating how government policy making could be improved by measuring and valuing what matters most to people, communities and the environment. Measuring What Matters encourages a long–term and holistic approach to policy–making, and starts from the premise that we have a tendency to measure the wrong things and therefore to pursue the wrong goals. Direct financial costs and potential savings often drive policy decisions, whereas broader economic and social costs are not always taken into account. This means that policy makers are often taking decisions on the basis of partial information.

The specific aims of this study are:

- to scrutinise the system currently used to measure the effectiveness of different types of sentencing for non–violent women offenders (specifically, custodial sentences and community penalties);
- to devise a more comprehensive set of indicators based on the impacts of sentences on offenders, their families, local communities and wider society;
- to compare the full costs and benefits of both custodial and community sentences;
- to examine the potential of SROI to contribute to decision–making in this area.

The findings from this research are presented in two separate sections. The first relates to measurement and the problems that have been identified with the current approach. The second presents our SROI analysis comparing prison and community sentences. This is followed in section three by recommendations for action and a discussion of the systemic reforms needed if we are to measure what matters and achieve better outcomes in criminal justice.

Our report begins, however, with a review of recent criminal justice policy in relation to women and the broader prison estate. This gives some context for how the UK has come to be locking up so many women.

The Policy: Why are we locking up more women?

There are more women in our prisons today than at any time in the past hundred years.[23] On entering prison many are considered vulnerable and are themselves victims of crime. Most will leave prison still encumbered by the drug, drink or mental health problems with which they entered, and the majority will go on to re–offend.

The women's prison population has doubled since 1997, having grown more than twice as fast as that of men over the same period.[24] This has been marked by a corresponding increase in reconviction rates.[25]

Two thirds of women enter prison on remand. By the time they reach court, 20 per cent are acquitted and over half receive some form of community penalty, therefore the majority never receive a custodial sentence. Between 70 and 75 per cent of women in prison have mental health problems (a rate 35 times higher than for the general population) and at least 67 per cent suffer from drug and/or alcohol dependence.[26]

Women's prisons have some of the worst outcomes in the criminal justice system. In England in 2007, for example, women represented 6 per cent of the prison population but 49 per cent of incidents of serious self–harm.[27] There is evidence that factors such as domestic violence, abuse, mental health problems and substance misuse play a big part in propelling women into the steely embrace of the criminal justice system.[28] These factors are often rooted in women's experiences of poverty.[29]

In 2006 Baroness Corston was commissioned by the then Home Secretary to review the situation of women with particular vulnerabilities in the criminal justice system. This followed the deaths of six women prisoners at HMP Styal between August 2002 and August 2003 and the resulting reports produced by the Cheshire coroner and the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman. The Corston Review was submitted to ministers in December 2006 and proposed fundamental reform. Its 43 recommendations focused on improving sentencing, providing more and better community punishments and developing a network of support and supervision centres. It also recommended reconfiguring the prison estate to include smaller units with improved healthcare that are reserved for those women whose offending is so serious or violent that there can be no alternative to custody.

The Corston Review took place in the context of an increase in the use of custodial sentences across the system. The risk of becoming a victim of crime is now 24 per cent compared with 40 per cent in 1995 yet the prison population has almost doubled since Labour came to power in 1997.[30] About two–thirds of adult prisoners re–offend; rates are higher again for young people whose recidivism is generally related to a substance use problem.[31]

The British Crime Survey reports that crime peaked in 1995, and has since fallen by 42 per cent. There have been large decreases in burglary and vehicle thefts over the past ten years (burglary down 59 per cent, vehicle thefts down 61 per cent) and also in violent crime (down 43 per cent).[32]

In 2007 the Carter Review of Prisons proposed strategies to reduce pressures on the prison system. These strategies attempt to tackle the inter–related problems of the prison and criminal justice systems by modernising the penal estate and expanding its capacity by 10,500 places by 2014. Carter suggested dealing with women's provision by 'bolting on' women's units to the new 'Titan' prisons. This contrasts not just with the Corston report but also with findings from the recent evaluation of the Together Women programme, where stakeholders regarded women–only provision as 'vital'.[33]

The response to Carter and the political pressure from increased costs has been to focus on greater efficiencies, primarily through reducing unit costs and creating economies of scale.[34] Yet these 'efficiencies' – such as the Titan proposals – may result in higher long–term costs if their impact on outcomes for offenders, their families and the public are not assessed. For example, research has found that maintaining family ties through prison visiting reduces recidivism[35] and increases the chances of ex–prisoners taking up employment and finding accommodation.[36] And yet it is possible that having fewer, larger prisons may discourage family visits. If this were the case, savings from lower unit costs are likely to be very low compared to potential savings from reducing reoffending, and are likely therefore to represent a false economy.[37]

Although the government has committed itself to reducing the numbers of women sentenced to prison by investing in alternatives, and 'engaging' with magistrates, it has rejected proposals on smaller, local prisons on the basis of cost: "The size is just not sufficient to enable us economically to provide the sorts of services in each of these places that you would want to provide."[38] This is in the face of cross–party support for Corston and an ICM poll commissioned by Smartjustice that found 86 per cent public support for local support and supervision centres for women who offend.[39]

What is certain is that the current approach of imprisoning more women than ever before is not a rational policy. It flies in the face of the evidence about how ineffective it is in terms of rehabilitation. One of the reasons for the failure of policy makers to change tack may be the absence of robust data to guide them. The next section of this report focuses on what is wrong with the current measurement system, setting out how it operates and adding an examination of the rationale for conducting this SROI analysis.

Section 1: Valuing What Matters

Instead of answering important questions and inspiring services to improve, measurement has become increasingly associated with ideas of targets and bureaucracy. Plenty of evaluations are conducted but often with little obvious connection to the policies being implemented. Few are designed to provide the hard evidence of effectiveness that is required.

Introduction

A 2008 report into youth offending found that government investment in this area has had "no measurable impact".[40] Yet the Ministry of Justice insisted that juvenile crime had fallen during the period under study,[41] and the Youth Justice Board responded by criticising the methodology used in the research.[42]

This debate highlights why robust measurement is important. In its absence, enlightened discussions about how resources are allocated within the system and across other systems become impossible.

National targets that relate to the criminal justice system include Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets on crime reduction and improving the delivery of justice, and a standard on public protection.[43,44] Beneath the national–level measures, the sheer complexity of the criminal justice system means that a number of bodies find themselves working towards their own targets and indicators without necessarily doing so in a coherent and joined–up manner. The cracks between services that result from this have long been recognised.[45] Measures taken to try to improve cohesion have included the creation of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) to focus on 'end–to–end' offender management and the setting of cross–cutting criminal justice PSA targets under which various departments share responsibility for reducing re–offending.

This section sets out a critique of the way in which evaluation and measurement are currently conducted. It does this by looking separately at the process of how things are measured as well as the content. Although these two areas are interlinked – a poor process leads to focusing on the wrong things – examining them separately is a useful way of identifying the sources of problems and identifying solutions. The section concludes with a discussion of the problems with measuring re–offending, and how an over–emphasis on it has led to a clash between government priorities and those of women offenders.

1. The measurement process

Information is required by decision makers to enable them to make and resource policy decisions. The 'journey of change' that individuals typically make on the way to desisting from offending means there are certain signs or signals that we can look out for to see whether they are on the right track.

We have identified problems, however, in three aspects of the measurement process, which have led to the wrong kinds of information being gathered at the system and individual levels. These are:

- the lack of a ***theory of change*** for prison.

- the way in which evaluations happen.
- centralised targets.

A theory of change for the use of prison

Penal policy has a number of stated objectives, the main ones being rehabilitation, public protection, deterrence and retribution. Current policy is dominated by the latter three even though the greatest long–term value comes from successful rehabilitation, which ultimately leads to crime reduction.

For example, if the argument that prisons exacerbate criminal behaviour is accepted,[46] then the rehabilitation objective is being undermined to achieve retribution, as the public protection objective is only achieved in the short term, and there is little evidence that prison is an effective deterrent.[47] Without a strong evidence base on the rehabilitative impact of different types of interventions, it is difficult to understand what value is being delivered for the billions of pounds being spent in the criminal justice system. Yet politicians rarely discuss whether prisons should, like other policy instruments, have a coherent theory of change with tangible outcome objectives.

It is unsurprising given the potentially contradictory aims of penal policy – can you rehabilitate someone while meting out retribution? – that the objectives of criminal justice interventions lack clarity. This is reflected in policy evaluations.[48] The scope of evaluation is often confined to questions about whether the programme was delivered in the way intended, rather than whether broader goals were achieved, and indeed whether they were the right goals in the first place.

In addition, the time horizon of policy is too short–term. The current discourse focuses too narrowly on the immediate cost of a prison place compared with other interventions[49] (see Appendix 1 for a fuller discussion on the problems of making these kinds of cost comparisons). This is inevitably influenced by the way in which the system is financed, working to short–term budget and spending cycles.

The way in which impacts on the children of women offenders are accounted for illustrates why this is problematic. Offending is often an inter–generational phenomenon. Today's sentencing approaches may lead to greater costs in the long run by increasing the likelihood that children will themselves become offenders. The way in which decisions are made needs should be taking account of this long–term picture.

The quality of evaluations

There is little regulation of evaluation in the UK. There are a number of problems with the evaluation industry that apply to the criminal justice field as well as others:

1. The programme or department being evaluated normally commissions the evaluation. When the evaluator's client is the programme being assessed, there is a temptation to show positive outcomes rather than being critical.

2. Evaluations of this nature often focus on a single programme and do not take the opportunity to compare like with like by benchmarking against the performance of other similar programmes. For example, it is inappropriate to compare chronic drug use among offenders with trends in the general population and then to conclude that an intervention may be failing. Drug use is higher among people on very low incomes, and therefore this group might provide a better comparison with an ex–offender population.

Theory of Change

Defines all building blocks required to bring about a given long–term goal. This set of connected building blocks – interchangeably referred to as outcomes, results, accomplishments, or preconditions – is depicted on a map sometimes referred to as an impact map. This is a graphic representation of the journey of change, and the model has been developed by the Aspen Institute.

www.theoryofchange.org

3. Programmes do not last long enough to be influenced by data from evaluations, which can therefore only look at the effectiveness of processes and outputs.

Although there have been attempts by government to introduce higher standards in evaluation, there is still an absence of an accepted methodological standard for the UK.

Centralised target setting

The use of centralised targets in public policy has been controversial ever since they were introduced[50] and yet they endure. Targets have been problematic for many reasons, including the risk of unintended consequences, the perverse effects on staff motivation and incentives, and the inflexibility they produce. Targets may help achieve a specific objective or make a process function more efficiently (e.g. by reducing waiting times) but if they are the wrong targets they may also play a part in distorting performance and undermining overall effectiveness. Choosing inappropriate targets may displace valuable resources from elsewhere. A forthcoming paper from **nef** will discuss these issues in more detail.

2. The content of what is measured

This section explains how an inadequate system of measurement has led to us focusing on the wrong things when dealing with women in the criminal justice system. It is set out in four subsections:

- Measuring outputs
- Setting measures that are too generic
- Overemphasising risk and failure
- Overemphasising reoffending.

Measuring outputs

Outputs are easy to measure. They are an indication that an action has been taken – a sentence given, a treatment provided, a training course attended. But a focus on outcomes is what is really needed to provide longer–term, more sustainable goals and help to show whether an intervention has actually made a difference. Real or perceived difficulties in measuring outcomes have often led to their being ignored in favour of measuring only outputs. Outputs usually have a role to play in achieving longer–term outcomes, but they are not enough: they are 'means' rather than 'ends'.

Across all the areas of policy studied as part of **nef**'s Measuring What Matters programme, we have seen how focusing too closely on measuring outputs can create perverse incentives that mean important priorities are neglected. Criminal justice is no exception. Performance measures set out in NOMS's National Reducing Re–offending Delivery Plan include outputs such as the percentage of prison drug treatment programmes completed, and the number of prisoners signing voluntary drug testing compacts.[51] These indicators do not measure the level of harm reduction associated with treatment and testing programmes – i.e. whether such interventions are effective. A similar problem occurs when hospitals measure numbers of patients who have received treatment but not whether those patients' health has actually improved.

Setting measures that are too generic

Progress reporting for individuals will vary across interventions but overall the measures used to track the progress of non–violent women are inadequate. OASys (the Offender Assessment System)[52] is the closest thing to a national monitoring system, though it is primarily a needs assessment database. It was introduced to provide courts with more consistent identifications of needs linked to offending, so that pre–sentence reports could support consistency in sentencing.

But OASys is only used for those serving a sentence of one year or more. Though they may make up as little as 10 per cent of the prison population at any one time, 66 per cent of people sent to prison serve less than a year. Comparable records for these offenders are not kept. Relatively little is known about how these individuals are faring until they reappear in prison, partly because there is no post–release supervision for those serving less than a year. This applies to non–violent offenders, the majority of whom serve short sentences, or a series of short sentences.[53]

Women make up a small proportion of the offender population, and criminal justice measures are typically developed with male offenders in mind. Women offenders typically have different circumstances and experiences leading them to offend. They often have care responsibilities for dependent children, and it is well documented that women's non–violent offences are particularly strongly associated with mental health problems, drug and alcohol misuse, and poverty. A recent study found that a majority of stakeholders in the sector thought that women had at least some different needs to men.[54]

Understanding the genesis of problems that lead to criminal conviction is essential if suitable interventions are to be designed to address women's behaviour. Where causal factors differ, so should the intervention; having the most appropriate gender–sensitive service measures in place can help guide this.

Case Study: Cathie

Cathie's example shows how understanding the changes experienced by an individual, and supporting her with appropriate services post–sentence, is key to reducing re–offending.

Cathie is 48 years old. She has held different jobs such as managing a bar. Both of her parents were alcoholics, and Cathie began drinking at 13. She was drinking three–quarters of a bottle of gin and two to three bottles of wine daily.

At the time of entering 218 Cathie was technically homeless but occasionally staying with her mother. She came to 218 through the Court Outreach team, due to Breach of the Peace and police assault incidents that she cannot remember because of her alcohol use at the time. She began her stay in the Centre with thoughts of suicide and 'low mood'. She was emotionally vulnerable and tearful in the first few days.

Cathie attended sessions of mediation, relaxation and exercise during her time at the centre, with a number of reviews to assess her progress. She was both consistent and enthusiastic about her detoxification despite the sweats and shaking. Over time she was referred for employment training and enrolled in an IT course at the local college. She benefited from continuity of care through an addiction worker from the Health Action Team who was able to see her through a relapse.

After leaving 218 Cathie rated her self–esteem at the highest rating, acknowledging the lifestyle changes that she had made since being involved with the programme. She still meets her addiction worker fortnightly and has settled on her mental health medication, reporting more confidence and control of her addiction. She spoke of having more control within her relationships while being significantly more positive and motivated in her life in general. Since the programme, she has given up alcohol and introduced a routine into her life that breaks the cycle of addiction and offending. She is looking forward to her future, getting her own place to live, and developing new skills through the local college and the Genesis programme.

Over–emphasising risk and failure

Current criminal justice measures focus mainly on where interventions fail, rather than whether they succeed in enabling individuals to lead fulfilling, law–abiding lives.[55] This is problematic for a number of reasons.

If a system over–emphasises failure, then it is very difficult to build up an understanding of why some people in that system succeed and to adapt services accordingly. Probation officers we spoke to in the course of our research reported that they are formally required to focus on prolific and high–risk offenders. In practice this means they have very little time to deal with the rehabilitative needs of other offenders (including female offenders, since women are generally less likely to be prolific or high–risk offenders).

Sometimes the very act of measuring something will help encourage more of it, so by only measuring deficits we do not encourage positive actions that might lead to successful outcomes. For example, family support might be a potential asset that a woman can draw upon but if her key worker is not encouraged to consider it then it may be ignored. People naturally gravitate towards the things they are good at, and this can have the effect of reinforcing positive behaviour.

Finally it is often assumed that success is simply the absence of failure, but measuring success might involve measuring a whole range of different things. A good example of this comes from our qualitative research. Women interviewed noted that during their support–focused community sentences, self–confidence increased and they felt more autonomous and in control of their lives. These things were important to them – they believed that confidence and a sense of autonomy could be valuable in laying a foundation for rebuilding their lives in the future. They indicated these were the first steps on a road to dealing with their debts, poor relationships, drug use etc. These steps are not measured or valued in systems such as OASys. As well as being positive factors in their own right, the presence of such conditions may lead to future savings for everyone through reductions in crime.

Conclusion

If they do not focus on the factors that contribute to rebuilding lives, criminal sentences will send people back into the community with a high probability that they will return in the near future. The emphasis on reducing re–offending is an example of where a government priority prevails over what individuals need. It assumes that there is a conflict between what is in the rehabilitative interests of offenders and society generally.

Finding better ways to measure progress will help inform the development of better interventions. Better measurement mechanisms will also help meet demands from the sentencing authorities for more effective ways to deal with the consequences of crime and prevent further incidents. The next section describes the findings of our alternative economic analysis that values hidden costs and benefits, facilitating a richer understanding of the impacts of sentencing decisions.

Section 2: The real costs of locking women up

Any discussion about investment is largely irrelevant if is not connected to the outcomes that the investment is bringing about. The **nef** Measuring What Matters programme is designed to address this problem by moving the debate beyond the level of money invested in the system to a fuller analysis of value for money - in essence, creating an understanding of the relationship between inputs and outcomes across public services.

Introduction

Prisons are commonly thought of as very expensive. The ***variable annual cost*** of keeping someone in prison is well in excess of the average industrial wage in the UK.[56] The total prison and probation bill is now in the region of £5 billion per year – a figure that is set to increase further as the prison population continues to expand. There are potential lost opportunity costs here as well; to put this in context, more is now spent on punishing and rehabilitating prisoners than on stimulating enterprise in deprived communities[57]

Parliament is currently considering a proposal called Justice Reinvestment[58] that would see a proportion of the £5 billion prison and probation budget being invested in low–income communities. The thinking behind this is that prevention is better than cure, and crime is one of the negative outcomes of inbuilt inequalities in our economic system that needs to be addressed.

Any discussion about investment is largely irrelevant if is not connected to the outcomes that the investment is bringing about. On a cost comparison basis alone, support focussed community provision can sometimes be more expensive than a corresponding prison sentence (See Appendix 1 for a fuller discussion on how input costs are calculated). The **nef** Measuring What Matters programme is designed to address this problem by moving the debate beyond the level of money invested in the system to a fuller analysis of value for money – in essence, creating an understanding of the relationship between inputs and outcomes across public services. We use a method called Social Return on Investment (SROI) to do this. SROI measures the value of benefits relative to the cost of achieving those benefits, and does so from the perspective of a wide variety of stakeholders.

This section of the report explains the mechanisms through which alternatives to custody affect women, their families and society generally. The analysis we provide is a hypothetical comparison between the costs and benefits of prison and those associated with specific alternatives to the prison system. Using SROI allows us to consider a range of costs and benefits that are not normally included in narrow ***cost/benefit analyses*** (such as the costs of unemployment and family breakdown). It also enables us to take account of the long–ranging effects and costs that imprisonment has on the children of women offenders.

Variable Annual Cost

Each year there will be a cost of labour material, or overhead that changes according to the prison population. Combined with fixed costs, variable costs make up the total cost. While the total variable cost for each prison changes with the number of inmates, the total fixed cost stays the same.

Cost/Benefit Analysis

A method of reaching economic decisions by comparing the cost of doing something with its benefits. The concept is relatively simple, but difficulty often arises in decisions about which costs and which benefits to include in the analysis. This is especially so when relevant costs and benefits do not have a price. Cost–benefit analysis usually looks at returns to one stakeholder – the State.

Our approach

The starting point for any SROI analysis is a conversation with stakeholders about the things that are important to measure; outcomes and sources of value are identified by them so that the analysis is based on people's real experiences. The examples used as part of this research were Centre 218 in Scotland and the Asha Centre in Worcester (see descriptions below). Interviews took place with women serving sentences at both, and we also interviewed women in Bronzefield prison in Middlesex.

A lack of longitudinal data meant it was not possible for us to measure many of the things that these women identified as important to them. But their experiences have informed both our broad research approach and our understanding of the weaknesses of the current system of measurement in criminal justice interventions.[59]

Our analysis relied on existing data about re–offending, which we acknowledge is only a partial measure of progress. Our scenario is hypothetical for a couple of reasons:

- It is not possible to 'prove' that these centres are achieving lower re–offending outcomes. They are well placed to do so, however, as their model of care contains the elements that would be required to deal with the causes of offending behaviour.

- Centres such as Asha and 218 are rare, which means they are not available options for most sentencing authorities. Additional investment would be required for the capital and set–up costs of similar facilities.

We began by calculating the costs of maintaining the status quo – women continuing to be sent to prison in similar numbers and continuing to re–offend at similar rates. From this we were able to see what level of reduced re–offending would be required from a community penalty to make the intervention worthwhile, and to model the level of investment required to achieve such an outcome.

Findings

The two key variables in the analysis were the cost per intervention[60] and the re–offending rate.[61] Because of the lack of outcomes data and the different costs of different types of community penalty,[62] we calculated the fall in the level of re–offending necessary to justify the cost of an intervention. We explain below how our calculations were made.

Using the most conservative assumptions available, the research has found that:

- For every pound invested in support–focused alternatives to prison, £14 worth of social value is generated to women and their children, victims and society generally over ten years

- Put another way, if alternatives to prison achieve only an additional reduction of just 6 per cent in re–offending, the state would recoup the investment required to achieve this in just one year

- The long–run, ***discounted value*** of these benefits is in excess of £100 million over a ten–year period

- These savings represent 'added value' i.e. they are what would have been achieved above and beyond sending people to prison

- On this basis, costs could increase nine–fold, to £27,000 for each woman, and the return would still be positive. This is still substantially lower than the average day, or residential rate, at our other example, at Centre 218, which includes more intensive detox facilities than the Asha Centre.[63]

Discounted Value

Reducing the value by a given percentage for each year which the benefit is calculated to account for the 'time value of money', or that fact that £1 today is not worth the same as £1 in future years.

For this analysis we recognise that some benefits – especially benefits to children – will mostly occur in the long run. These are therefore calculated separately. However, some returns can also be realised in the very short term. For example, the costs of rehousing[64] ex–prisoners (often in emergency accommodation) can be very high compared to the savings from allowing women to keep their homes while serving a community penalty.

The Asha Centre

The Asha Centre in Worcester was established in its present form in 2002 and has a national reputation for its work with disadvantaged women. It offers women – irrespective of age, ethnicity or sexuality – easy, immediate and confidential access to a range of services.

The centre provides access to resources that help to strengthen the position of women offenders and to give them a route out of offending, poverty and deprivation, as well as raising their level of emotional confidence. The women–only centre also provides a safe environment for women from minority ethnic groups.

Those using the centre get access to many services e.g. health, legal advice, debt management, careers guidance, and general information. The centre runs a women's programme which aims to change offending behaviour through tackling the reasons that women are offending in the first place, such as abuse, drug misuse and low self–esteem.

Centre 218

Centre 218 was established in Glasgow in August 2003 with the aim of providing a range of services for women in the criminal justice system, primarily within the boundaries of Glasgow City Council. Based on a single site, the Centre provides a day service and supported accommodation. In addition to prescribing facilities, it offers support – residential or daily – for detoxification.

The model for the service was developed by the Inter–Agency Forum which comprised representatives of the Scottish Executive Justice Department, Glasgow City Social Work Department, Glasgow City Council Housing Department, Greater Glasgow Health Board and a range of other agencies. It provides residential and community–based resources in a safe environment to women aged 18 years of age or over who have involvement in the criminal justice system, who are assessed as particularly vulnerable to custody or re–offending and who may have a substance misuse problem. The Centre is run by Turning Point, an organisation in the voluntary sector which provides support for those with complex social needs, particularly in relation to drug and alcohol issues.

Social costs for the children of women offenders

As well as providing new evidence on the real costs of imprisoning non–violent women offenders, **nef** analysed the adverse consequences of mothers' imprisonment for their children.

- Drawing on existing evidence that children of prisoners are three times more likely to have mental health problems than those of the general population, **nef**'s analysis indicates that the cost to the children themselves, and to the state, amounts to more than £17 million over a ten–year period.
- The main social cost incurred by the children of imprisoned mothers – and by the state in relation to these children – results from the increased likelihood of their becoming 'NEET' (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and, therefore, having poorer long–term prospects.
- The reduced likelihood of the children becoming problem drug users, or becoming involved in crime, results in further savings.

Who benefits?

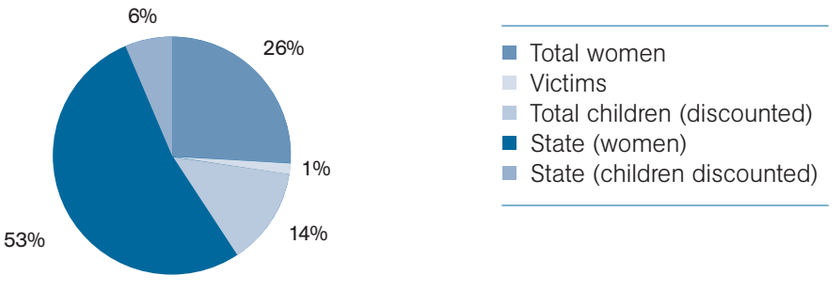
Our analysis identified through consultation four key stakeholders for whom benefits accrue. These stakeholders are detailed in the table below along with the outcomes that research suggests will result from reduced re–offending. When we refer to the state this stands for broader benefits to society.

Stakeholder Map

Stakeholder	Objectives
Criminial justice system	· Fewer convictions · Employment retained (benefits, tax & output) · Emergency accomodation from homelessness avoided · Reduced social services intervention with offender's family · Improvements in mental and physical health · Reduced behavioural problems, drug use and offending behaviour among children · Fewer children becoming NEET
Women	· Ability to retain employment · Homelessness avoided · Reduced indebtedness · Harm minimised from better managed or lower drug use · Improved mental health · Loss of contact with family avoided
Children	· Improved behaviour · Reduced chance of becoming NEET · Reduced chance of problematic drug use · Reduced chance of being involved in criminal activity · Contact with mothers maintained
Children	· Fewer crimes

The main beneficiary of better outcomes from sentencing is the state (representing society more generally), followed by women themselves and their children. Because SROI quantifies all the benefits generated for each stakeholder it is possible to compare the share of the total value produced for each. The chart below sets out the breakdown:

Share of benefit



Although public protection and impacts on victims are highly influential on policy in this area, we can see from our analysis that in relation to non–violent offences, the share of value to victims relative to other stakeholders is small.[65]

The next section summarises how calculations were derived for each of the outcomes that we included.

How we calculated these figures

To estimate the economic and social benefits of reduced re–offending, **nef** looked at female offenders who were sentenced to prison in one year (2005) for non–violent offences and did not have an extensive criminal history (having had less than three previous convictions). This amounted to 1,936 women, or 40 per cent of all non–violent women offenders sentenced to prison in that year. Using data from a range of authoritative and statistically robust sources we plotted the financial implications – over periods of 10 and 20 years – of giving these women support–focused community sentences instead of sending them to prison.

Our modelling assumes that reducing re–offending is associated with other positive benefits such as reduced drug use, improved mental health etc, as the correlations between these factors are well established. Our analysis also assumes that an offender will receive the community intervention at an early stage: before she becomes a persistent offender, at which point her offending behaviour is more entrenched and the negative impacts on her and her family become more difficult to change.

The analysis has been confined to those benefits for which data are available. Although we have used ***proxies*** where possible, the results are therefore likely to underestimate the true value. For each outcome we have removed the cost of what would have happened anyway from our calculations (i.e. the 'deadweight') by using the most appropriate ***benchmarks*** possible. In addition we have distinguished between short and long–term benefits, avoided ***double counting***, and based calculations on ***marginal costs*** where possible.

An SROI approach is about valuing things that matter. Financial proxies have been used to monetise non–market traded outcomes, and these are reflected in the overall return ratio. A detailed description for how this was done for each outcome is available in Appendix 1 and Appendices 4 and 5 show a breakdown of the calculations. The box below gives an example for one of those outcomes: decreased drug use.

Example of how costs have been derived

Five per cent of the costs to the state, and 28 per cent of the total costs of re–offending, came from drug use. We know that 66 per cent of female offenders are problematic drug users (e.g. heroin and crack users). We therefore assumed that of our sample of women (116) who benefited from early intervention, 66 per cent would otherwise have continued to use drugs. Of these, however, we assumed that some would continue to use drugs anyway, even if their offending behaviour was reduced. To estimate this proportion we used a benchmark of drug use within low–income communities, which gives a deadweight calculation of 58 per cent. We assumed that the remainder (44 women) had a positive outcome in relation to reduced drug use.

Costs to the state vary significantly in official and academic studies, so we have taken the mid–point of two reputable studies (£7,374).[66] A proxy was used for the cost to women themselves: the amount that a problematic drug user spends on her habit each year (£16,500). These costs were multiplied by the number of beneficiaries, projected for each stakeholder over ten years and discounted accordingly. The overall figure of £100 million worth of value over ten years is an aggregate of such calculations including other areas such as improved mental health, and reduced social services costs.

Proxies

In selecting indicators there is a trade–off between data availability and accuracy. When data are unavailable or difficult to obtain, proxies can be used. A proxy is a value that is deemed to be close to the desired indicator. For example, the overall regional unemployment rate may be used as a proxy for the local unemployment rate if the required data are unavailable.

Benchmarks

Benchmark(s) are used for the comparison of similar processes across organisations or areas. The ideal benchmark is the same sample group not receiving a treatment, or intervention but this is not usually possible. Instead, a group which matches the intervention group needs to be chosen for comparison. Only by using appropriate benchmarks can the additional change made by an intervention, or policy be understood.

Double–Counting

Double–counting in accounting is an error whereby a transaction is counted more than once. In this instance we mean counting a cost twice where it only occurs once (e.g. drugs and health). In SROI counting value to different stakeholders twice is not considered double counting, such as the value to children and their parents of contact, as the benefit is experienced twice.

Marginal Costs

Marginal cost is the change in total cost that arises when the prison population expands by 1. This is different from the unit cost (total prison costs divided by number of prisoners) as each additional prisoner will not increase the fixed costs (buildings, staff and so forth).

Non–monetised benefits

As well as a lack of data on long–term outcomes, we came up against an absence of good short–term outcome indicators. We did, however, identify some useful indicators at the two centres featured in this research. In interviews at Asha and Centre 218, women reported much higher levels of confidence and self–esteem than women we interviewed in prison at Bronzefield. At Centre 218, 82 per cent of women reported an increase in confidence and self–esteem, compared to 50 per cent at the Asha Centre, and 36 per cent at Bronzefield. After interventions by Centre 218 and Asha began, women at these centres reported reductions in depression and anxiety of 64 per cent and 46 per cent respectively. Autonomy and control were identified by women offenders as important outcomes to them, and women at both centres reported overwhelming improvements in these areas of their lives. All the women at 218 and 82 per cent at the Asha Centre reported positively.

Although not based on a statistically valid sample, the interviews conducted demonstrate that it may be possible to use these types of indicators as measures of '***distance travelled***'. This concept acknowledges that persistent offending is often entrenched and unlikely to change quickly. Instead, we need better ways of measuring short–term changes so we know if someone is on the right track. To do this properly, more research would be required on whether short–term improvements in well–being can predict other outcomes. For example, one study that has explored the links between these types of outcomes and so called 'hard' outcomes found that an increase of 1 per cent in self–reported happiness yields a 3 per cent increase in income in later life.[67]

Distance Travelled

Distance Travelled is a measurement term that refers to the progress that a person makes towards harder outcomes like employment or ceasing reoffending. This can include differences in feelings, attitudes, perceptions or skills over time, using self–reporting and observation methods.

Case Study: Patricia

Patricia is 43 years old. She has been homeless for three–and–a–half years, living in a hostel or sleeping rough. She has three children in their 20s. She started drinking when she was 12 years old, and consumes about a bottle of hard alcohol and six cans of beer on a daily basis. At one point she used heroin, handfuls of tranquilisers, and around a half bag of cocaine daily. Her offences, e.g. Breach of the Peace and assault, are directly linked to her substance use, compounded by mental health difficulties.

When Patricia arrived at Centre 218 she was anxious and vulnerable. She was afflicted by sweats and cramps, and had infections in both her arm and in her urinary tract, as well as cirrhosis of the liver. At 218 she detoxified, underwent a range of reviews, and participated in group and one–to–one counselling sessions that helped her to understand how her personal traumas related to her substance use.

She received prescriptions to curb her alcohol cravings and learned strategies for coping with the feelings that led to her drug and alcohol binges. Upon her release from 218 she was committed to becoming settled and stable in the community. While she may re–offend in the future, Patricia has begun to learn coping strategies that deal with the causes of her offending behaviour and strategies for dealing with her life differently. She has been able to overcome her physical dependency on drugs and alcohol.

Example of added value – the Asha Centre

The Asha Centre recently completed a European Social Fund (ESF) project aimed at enabling women who lack educational qualifications to gain very basic ones. Despite the fact that it the project was only 27 months long, 71 per cent of women obtained credits or awards at NOCN level 1, 33 per cent progressed to mainstream higher or further education and 19 per cent secured employment. When the project ended 38 of the 153 women were continuing as learners, suggesting that even better outcomes could occur in the future.

The philosophy of the Asha Centre is that the deficit in education that is so often found in women offenders is likely to be a product of lack of self–esteem caused by poor family experiences and other forms of social and economic disadvantage.

The Centre believes that the ESF project was a very important piece of work for a number of reasons:

- It connected with the remarkable appetite that disadvantaged women have for learning. The Centre regards courses as a more important tool than social casework (although of course UK provision is embedded in a social casework approach).

- It provided a realistic basis for improvements in other important areas: self–esteem, parenting, future employment prospects, and social relationships.

- It showed the potential in future to defeat the tendency for disadvantaged women to find employment that requires low skills and offers poor remuneration.

- It highlighted something that isn't sufficiently recognised – the importance of educational qualifications for women offenders themselves. Government policy is directed at reducing dependence on benefits, and in this respect it is short term. Getting women into employment, rather than building their skills and qualifications to pursue a career, is the primary aim.

As a result of this project, courses that award qualifications will be given a more prominent place in the Asha Centre's provision. The Centre will also be registered as an approved learning centre, to enable it to develop such courses and tailor them more closely to learners' needs.

Case Study: Sue

Sue was placed on a community order with a Drug Rehabilitation Requirement. She had several similar orders that were not successful - she continued using heroin and stealing to support her addiction.

Sue took part in the Exploring Women's Lives Programme at the Asha Women's Centre in Worcester. Sue was a central member of the group, readily adapted to working in a group context and recognised the positive support she could gain from the centre. The programme helped her to address the underlying issues to her drug use including assessing her own experiences and how these affected her behaviour. By focussing on

- assertive behaviour
- health and mental health
- general substance misuse
- anger management
- stress
- domestic violence
- stereotyping of women.

Sue put together a comprehensive action plan was assisted by counselling and support services provided by Asha. She enrolled in Asha's 'Get Qualified' Programme and transformed her skills into specific qualifications, helping her achieve her employment goals. Sue completed her community order, is in full time employment, and is receiving support from Asha to maintain and build on the progress she has made.

How sensitive are these assumptions?

As SROI is an inherently subjective methodology, a technique called sensitivity analysis is used to test how sensitive to change the assumptions are. We have already modelled the different costs per intervention and the reduction in re–offending that would be required to achieve a positive return. In addition ***sensitivity analysis*** was carried out on one indicator – reduced social services involvement in the families of offenders. This variable was chosen for two reasons:

- There was a danger that this cost was also being counted elsewhere
- No breakdown of the components of the cost was available, so it was impossible to know if it overlapped with other costs included in the calculations.

Where costs are potentially unreliable in this way it is good practice to test how much reducing such costs would affect the overall return ratio. We found that if we removed the entire cost from the calculation, the social return dropped from £14 to £4.50 – a significant fall, but one that still leaves an overwhelmingly positive picture. We can infer from this that the story is quite convincing.

Sensitivty Analysis

An analysis such as SROI is inherently subjective because proxies are being used. It is therefore important to test how sensitive the assumptions and proxies are to change, i.e. the extent to which the ratio is affected by changing different assumptions.

Conclusions

This analysis shows that there are huge benefits from investing in alternatives to prison. Even small reductions in re–offending translate into significant savings. Traditional cost/benefit analysis only looks at narrow returns to one stakeholder, under–representing the real value of these initiatives. Taking an SROI approach shows us that because of their special position as primary carers, the costs of locking up women offenders will also have long–term consequences that will be felt by future generations.

Towards a new system of measurement and recommendations for policy

Measurement systems need to be put in place to enable a fuller analysis of the costs and benefits of different decisions. Government should change how it thinks about investment and sentencing for non–violent women must do more to meet their needs.

This report makes recommendations in relation to three aspects of criminal justice policy: measurement, finance and sentencing.

Our recommendations are drawn directly from this research, and are therefore most relevant to women in the criminal justice system. Many will also apply to the broader offender population. The aim of these recommendations is to improve the way in which we measure and therefore allocate resources within the system, which should in turn impact on the appropriateness of sentences handed down.

Recommendation 1:

Measurement systems need to be put in place to enable a fuller analysis of the costs and benefits of different decisions

It is essential that criminal justice policy becomes more evidence–informed and less ideological if we are to use public investment as effectively as possible to reduce crime, improve the lives of offenders and protect the public. This will require political leadership because the debate is currently quite polarised.

Better information about effectiveness is vitally important. This is not about commissioning more research but putting a stronger system of measurement in place, so that we can track the things that matter to people over the long term.

Any meaningful performance information/assessment system must focus – at the very least – upon two stakeholder groups: individual women offenders (to find out what works and why) and the state as a proxy for the broader society (to establish how the learning from assessment can be translated into policy action).

As discussed above individuals and policy makers require different types of information, and this is why it is difficult to produce a 'one–size–fits–all' indicator set. A single, coherent system is needed to ensure that measures relevant to both major stakeholder groups are taken into account. Such a system would include:

1. Individual–level measures for each outcome to identify which specific interventions are likely to enable and support individual offenders. This would involve a personalised assessment system that identifies appropriate interventions for women offenders and tracks how women are progressing against important outcome indicators (see boxes on page 26 for examples of how this happens at the Asha Centre and Centre 218).

2. System–level measures on each of the outcomes for decision makers, so that they can make broader policy decisions such as how much to invest in particular interventions. These system–level measures need to correspond with the individual–level measures as much as possible. Government will sometimes have to represent the needs of multiple stakeholders with competing priorities: victims and offenders' families, for example. Alongside the objectives of public protection, however, the system should recognise that the things that help offenders improve their lives ultimately benefit the public and victims.[68]

Such a system could exist alongside, or in place of, OASys (the current offender management system described earlier). Any system should also have the following components:

1. Capacity for identifying and responding to those outcomes that are particularly important to the individual offender. Setting up a measurement system in this way involves considering how the outcomes relate to the whole person and what each individual needs to get her life on track. These measures should be person–centred and include indicators of positive progress as described earlier.

2. An assessment of distance travelled. For drug and alcohol use, for example, assessing distance travelled would involve gathering evidence on women's substance use histories, and how far they have come in dealing with their problems. Distance travelled measures are a good alternative to measuring outputs, as they show meaningful change in the short term. The Outcomes Star designed originally for the homelessness sector and being replicated for other services is one such approach.

3. A theory of change informing all that is done. This is essential to understanding and tracking the relationship between investment and outcomes, and can contribute towards effective policy making. As described in Section 1, the links between investment and outcomes are often not well understood in criminal justice policies. See Appendix 3 for an example of a theory of change for working with women offenders.

4. An outcomes measurement framework that works for all offenders – not only those serving longer, more serious sentences.

5. An appropriate degree of rigour. For example, when comparing prison with alternatives, reconviction needs to be measured from the end of a community sentence not the beginning as currently happens.

6. A change in emphasis to focus on success factors. This should help point toward the interventions that can be most effective in enabling individuals to turn their lives around.

Recommendation 2:
Government should change how it thinks about investment

Our research shows an expanded, more accurate definition of 'costs' that should be considered by policy makers. Decision makers are currently disproportionately concerned with the financial cost incurred by public spending on policy programmes and initiatives (evidenced by the debate around Titans and the cost–based arguments against the some of Corston's recommendations such as the creation of a national network of support and supervision centres for women).

The analytical approach followed by **nef** involves identifying and valuing the wider economic, social and environmental costs and benefits of government interventions. This allows a fuller understanding of the effects that policy interventions have on people's lives.

Two examples of women–centred approaches to measurement

Example 1: Centre 218

This centre in Scotland works with women for around 12 weeks. It provides a safe environment in which the root causes of women's offending can be addressed. An important aspect of this is measuring and valuing the things that matter in the lives of women offenders, as described above. Each woman is assessed according to a three–point scale describing her situation, and these data are entered on a database.

Centre 218's person–centred approach means that for each woman it develops an individually–tailored programme. Women can vary in the number of days per week they commit to programmes depending on need. Some need occasional community–based support, while others need full–time residential support.

In its distance–travelled assessment Centre 218 charts progress on several key areas by using a well–known drug and alcohol misuse scale. This is done at regular intervals.

The key areas are:

- Social functioning
- General health
- Sexual/injecting behaviour
- Psychological profile
- Occupation
- Criminal involvement
- Drug/alcohol use
- Ongoing support
- Compliance
- Working relationships.

Centre 218 includes subjective indicators such as:

- Women's sense of self – assessing whether interventions have engendered greater respect, dignity, self–worth and changed expectations
- Autonomy and responsibility for oneself
- The strength of relationships that have been built with family, 218 workers and friends–engagement with others
- Women's financial situation – what improvements have been apparent, including the benefits picture
- Mental health improvement or otherwise
- Physical health effects, including abuse–related and gynaecological health
- The ability of women offenders to cope with emotional health issues.

Extended timescales are key. There are several cases where 218 has eventually had successful results by working over a longer period of time with particular women – women that other services had said they would not be able to help. Keeping longer–term records is important, even when sentences are shorter and people move in and out of the intervention.

Example 2: The Asha Centre

The Asha Centre's staff are in the process of developing an information system that uses an individual–level measurement system similar to that described above. To date they have been using a mix of an individual plan and standardised self–reported measures of change (confidence, mental health and so on). However, they are currently instituting an individual assessment and planning process that defines from the perspective of women themselves what issues represent obstacles in their lives, and identifies what progress would look like. Around this will be constructed individual plans for all women using the centre. These plans may be long–term, medium–term or short–term, depending on women's individual circumstances. Each plan will be regularly reviewed.

From this approach the Centre hopes that it will be able to establish a personal list of steps for each woman that represents what she would consider to be real progress. These lists could vary from one to ten items. Reviews could lead to a change of items, or indeed changes in key issues, so a certain amount of flexibility of response from funders will be required for this to work. The Centre is adapting its management information system to be able to capture and report on this.

The current government focus on short–term ***efficiencies*** may have unintended consequences that prove very costly in the long term. The system may miss the chance to secure a number of wider public benefits and 'economies of scope' – such as contributions from small, local providers of support–focused sentences, whose interventions can create social capital, align with local economic regeneration, and utilise local health, education and employment services. This issue is not confined to criminal justice; it relates to broader social policy, particularly in the light of Gershon Efficiency Savings as discussed in a previous paper published by **nef**.[69]

To be effective, criminal justice policy must be informed by a rational analysis of how resources can best be used to deliver desired outcomes. To achieve this, the Treasury should invest in research using approaches such as SROI. At present ***Whole Life Costing*** is completed before infrastructure projects are embarked upon but nothing equivalent exists for social services. Government currently seems able to apply long–term thinking to buildings, but less so services for vulnerable people.

SROI and other similar types of analysis could help inform policy makers, commissioners and sentencing authorities about the long–term consequences of decisions. Although Green Book guidance is to take cost effectiveness into account,[70] it is not apparent that this always happens in practice. Green Book guidance should promote the use of approaches such as SROI, which take a longer–term and multi–stakeholder perspective and interpret costs and benefits widely enough to include many sources of value.

One approach worth contemplating is adopting a model in criminal justice similar to that of the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) in the health sector. Although limited in that it only looks at value to the state, there are aspects of its methodology that could be replicated. NICE collates evidence on the therapeutic effects of drugs but it also gives guidance on value for money. Its work includes producing templates into which organisations can add local population and other factors, thereby estimating in advance the likely cost of agreeing to fund a treatment.[71] NICE has to take some very difficult decisions on resource allocation, but it does this with the help of a richer vein of information on outcomes and costs, and a more transparent process, than we see in other areas of social care.

Recommendation 3:
Sentencing for non–violent women must do more to meet their needs
There is a need to ensure that sentences handed down are used appropriately and are relevant to individuals' needs. In order for sentencing authorities to be able to make use of alternatives to custody, there needs to be enough good–quality service to meet demand. If the available alternatives to prison are inadequate, sentencing authorities may have no choice but to impose custodial sentences.

If more meaningful cost data can be generated, these should be provided to the sentencing authorities. It is essential that those handing down sentences have access to information that ensures they know not only what the direct cost of a sentence will be but also what the broader costs and benefits will be for women offenders, their families and their communities.

It is both feasible and desirable to provide sentencing authorities with cost information on factors such as the cost to family members or local authorities of caring for a female offender's children if she is imprisoned. Clearly it would not be possible to develop a detailed, individual analysis for each offender, but the type of cost information we propose could be generated and distributed as sentencing guidelines are. There is a potential role here for the new proposed Sentencing Commission.[72]

Efficiencies

Efficiency looks at the relationship between inputs and outputs. A gain can be made in a number of ways such as reduced inputs for the same outputs. An efficient market is one where the market price is an unbiased estimate of the true value of the investment. In social care price is a very poor proxy for value. Techniques such as SROI enable much broader definitions of efficiency and value than are currently being used.

Whole Life Costing

The immediate financial cost of one sentence vis–à–vis another fails to capture differences between their long–run effects on offenders, their families, communities and society. To know what we really pay for sentencing decisions, it is necessary to take a longer–term view. This kind of approach is already common in other areas of decision–making (such as infrastructure projects), but it has yet to take root in the criminal justice setting.

Conclusions

Criminal justice continues to be a highly contentious area of public policy. The public is an important stakeholder in the system, and as such should be better informed about how money is spent on their behalf, and what outcomes are achieved for that investment.

Fear of being a victim of crime has increased even with a decrease in actual crime, and the government is rightly concerned with public confidence in the system. However, confidence in the system would be well served by knowledge that the system is effective, and therefore delivers true 'value for money' (not just cheaper prisons).

When viewed over the long term the focus on input costs and short–term 'efficiencies' may have costly consequences for all of society. Social Return on Investment provides an alternative discourse. Viewed from this perspective the only way to meaningfully reduce the costs of criminal justice is to reduce crime.

Because they are convicted for relatively petty crimes and do not pose a huge threat to society, and because of their unique role as primary carers, non–violent women are a special case. Our research has shown that support–focused alternatives that deal with the underlying causes of women's offending could be more effective than prison sentences in helping them lead law–abiding lives.

The government has committed itself to reducing the numbers of women in prison by investing in alternatives. This commitment should include gathering the kinds of data required to ensure informed public and political debate and make sound judgements about returns on public investment.

Appendix 1
Methodology

While there are many studies that compare reoffending outcomes from prisons and community sentences, the results are inconclusive. This may partly be due to the variable quality and profile of offenders involved in these studies. Studies we have looked at have found reductions in recidivism ranging from 53 per cent[73] to 5 to 10 per cent.[74]

Our approach was to begin by calculating the costs of maintaining the status quo –women being sent to prison in similar numbers and continuing to reoffend at similar rates. From this we were able to calculate the minimum reduction in reoffending that would be required from a community penalty to make an intervention worth investing in.

The biggest data gaps that we encountered concerned the lack of evidence of impact from different types of criminal justice interventions on women and their children. Where studies have examined impact, they have done so only in relation to one outcome, reduced reoffending.

We know from our research with the Asha Centre and Centre 218 that there is a wider range of benefits (such as reduced drug use, or improved health) that could be measured. But we could not construct meaningful measurements from these because we lacked longitudinal data to enable us to measure against a statistically valid sample of women with a profile similar to that of our women offenders.

In order to build a more rounded and balanced model we have looked at the reoffending data as a driver for other benefits. There are a number of previous studies that we have been able to draw upon to allow comparisons to be made across different kinds of sentences. However, we know that improvements in indicators such as mental health and drug use are valuable in themselves and are likely to help reduce reoffending by women and their children in the future.

In relation to children we were interested in outcomes in relation to four areas: mental health, drugs, crime and employment/education. Evidence of impacts on reoffending was only available in relation to one of these: mental health. We have used a proxy of outcomes for children in care, who we know have a similar profile to children whose parents are offenders. This is an imperfect proxy, and research is required to fully understand the long–term effects of reoffending on inter–generational social exclusion.

Sensitivity analysis was also carried out on any findings that looked like they might make an impact on the overall social return. But additional modelling would be required to calculate the long–run costs more accurately. For example women are likely to respond differently to interventions depending on their past histories but this level of complexity was outside the scope of this study.

A real discount rate of 3.5 per cent was used on any benefits that would occur in the future, or that were calculated beyond one year, which is in line with recommendations in the Treasury Green Book.

Costs of reconviction – prisons versus community sentences[75]

In economic analyses of criminal justice interventions, different costs are used in relation to custody. The stated cost of a prisoner place in female local prisons for 2006–2007 was £41,084. The cost per prisoner at closed prisons holding women was £32,529.[76]

The stated cost does not include the cost of building the cell. It could be argued, given the pressure on prison places, that this should be included in some way, as holding a female offender in custody means that the place cannot be used for someone else, and therefore new places must be provided. According to a statement in the House of Commons, the cost of building a new place in 2005 was £99,839.[77]

The total Prison Service operating budget for 2006–2007 was £1,936 million. If all overheads are included and we assume that the women's prison population of 4,500 takes a proportionate amount from the total annual expense, then accommodating female offenders in 2006–2007 cost the taxpayer £108.4 million. This figure does not include prior criminal justice costs such as police, the courts, and probation services.

In this analysis we have sought to use the marginal costs of reduced prison places. This is in response to the fact that even if all of our sample of 1,900 women were displaced to a community system this would not result in any prisons being decommissioned and investments in infrastructure for community penalties would be required.

Marginal costs of prison places are difficult to calculate. We have followed the Home Office recommendation of using the lowest unit cost available (£20,000). We have assumed two three–month sentences per year, and have not included any non–custodial costs, as again the marginal costs are likely to be very low. We have also used a deadweight calculation of 36 per cent – the average proportion that stop reoffending after a prison sentence anyway. This compares with community sentence costs that range from £3,000 to £10,000 depending on type e.g. whether the facility is residential. These costs are not annual, though, and most community provision is much shorter. When viewed this way – on short–term unit costs alone – prison may in fact be cheaper.

It could be argued that given prison overcrowding, removing non–violent women from the system would decrease the pressure on the prison estate and avoid the tipping point that is being reached at which new prisons will need to be built. In addition, as we have demonstrated, the benefits from reduced reoffending should affect the future prison population through better outcomes for children. If this type of analysis were extended to the broader prison population it would then start to impact on the size of the prison estate. It is possible, therefore, that we have underestimated the savings to the criminal justice system in the long run.

Housing

In relation to housing, studies report varying impacts from offending. We used the most conservative of these studies (Home Office estimate of 10 per cent) and assumed that each person made homeless stays so for a year.[78] Our proxy cost was the cost of emergency accommodation for that year, £27,000.[79] Although some of these women will be living on the street rather than in emergency accommodation, there was no breakdown of this.

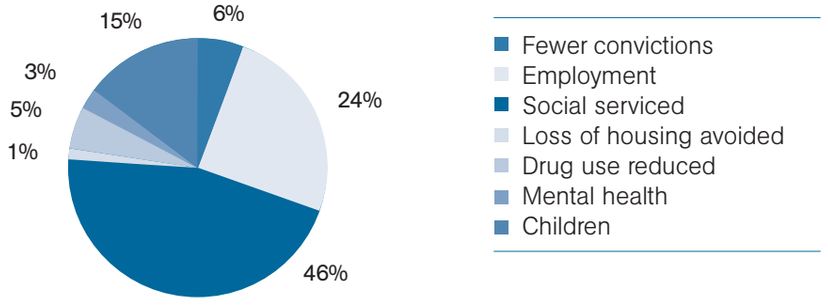
In addition we know that homelessness has many other costs that have not been included here – not least NHS costs from visits to Accident and Emergency departments, health checks related to sex working etc.

We have used the value of rent for that period as a proxy for value to the individual. We did not include the costs to women and their families of having to give up their homes even if this did not ultimately result in their becoming homeless.

In this instance we assumed 100 per cent ***attribution*** to the reduction in reoffending as our calculations were all conservative, and no benchmark data were available.

Attribution
When a benefit is assigned to a particular cause or source.

State



Children

Not enough is known about the scale of the impact of parental imprisonment on children, although what we do know suggests that their life chances are greatly diminished as a result of parents' offending and imprisonment.[80] Research has found that mental health outcomes are three times worse for prisoners' children.[81] In the absence of data on all of the outcomes identified by stakeholders have used this in our study as the basis for our assumptions of outcomes in three other areas: the likelihood of becoming NEET, becoming a drug user, or of involvement in crime (i.e. we have multiplied the average by three to get an estimate of the impact).

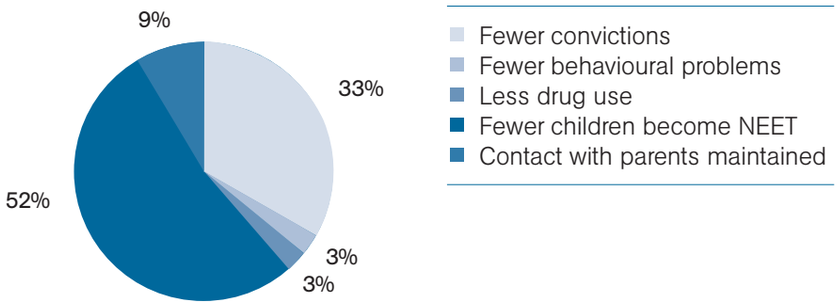
Avoiding young people becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) at 16 represents the greatest saving to society and to children themselves (52 per cent). This is unsurprising given the impacts of being NEET on the life chances of young people throughout their lives. A number of recent studies document the savings to the state of reducing the number of children becoming NEET.[82,83]

In addition, there are huge human and financial costs in adult life for children who fall out of education, employment or training. On average they will have poorer mental and physical health, die younger and be more likely to live in poverty into old age than the average population. The savings from avoiding NEET therefore represent a wide range of improvements in overall well–being.

In recognition of the fact that benefits to children do not accrue in the short run, we have assumed an average of ten years and discounted the total amount accordingly for the one–year calculations and for another ten years for the projected benefits thereafter.

To calculate deadweight, we used children in care as a benchmark group. Given that they are likely to have similar profiles, we assumed that the outcomes experienced by our sample groups of children would be at least as good as the outcomes for children in care if parents were to carry on offending.

Children



Mental Health

As a proxy for poor mental health outcomes we used attempted suicides in prison avoided. This is admittedly a limited measure: we know that people do not have to attempt suicide to experience a deterioration in mental health, and there is more to assessing improved mental health than reduced incidence of suicidal behaviour. The results from our exploratory interviews with the Asha Centre and 218 show, for example, a significant improvement in self–reported mental health compared to women in Bronzefield prison.

We have used official data on unit costs to the NHS from mental health problems to value savings to the state. For savings to women we have generated a proxy using a course of cognitive behavioural therapy at NHS prices of £40 per session, combined with the annual costs of health insurance from a high street insurer. As one in four people has a mental health problem, we have estimated deadweight at 75 per cent. Although the general population is not the correct benchmark, we do not have data on attempted suicides for a similar group, so although the benchmark group is broader the indicator is also broader and it is assumed that they will cancel each other out.

Drugs

Savings from reduced drug use accrued to all three stakeholders. For women and children we used the amount spent by a problematic drug user each year as a proxy for the value of reduced drug use. Our benchmark group was drug use within low– income communities, and was based on a Scottish Drugs Forum study that looked at the number of drug–related deaths that came from deprived areas in Scotland.[84] Attribution was therefore estimated at 58 per cent.

Employment

Seventy–one per cent of women were already in work prior to being sent to prison. We have assumed that the same proportion lose their employment and are unemployed on release from prison. We are also assuming no displacement effect from the economic contribution. Estimating ***displacement*** would require additional complex modelling that incorporated the economic benefit of reduced social exclusion and was not likely to impact either way on the overall return ratio. Neither have we calculated any costs to the other 30 per cent that would have been without work, even though they are likely to be less employable as a result of continuing to offend.

Displacement

This describes the negative effects of a policy which can occur when the benefits claimed by a programme participant are at the expense of others outside the programme. While introducing street lighting may reduce crime in an area it is likely to displace it to elsewhere leading to no overall net reduction.

We have assumed 100 per cent attribution here because the difficulty for ex–prisoners in gaining employment is well documented.[85] However, if a woman's community placement is residential (as with some of the Centre 218 placements), she may still have to give up her job and so these savings would not apply. While the benefit of keeping employment would be lower, it may be increased if the placement included specific help, or training for employment.

Family break–up

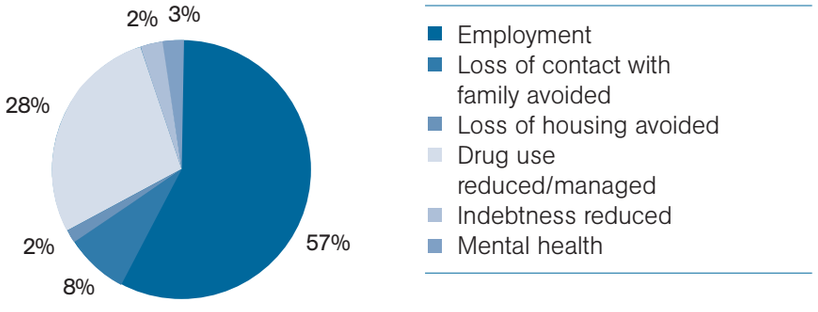
This was one of the more difficult outcomes to which to give a financial value. We know that 43 per cent of offenders lose contact with their families when they are sent to prison, and studies suggest that this is not lower for women than men. The cost of this to individuals, their children and partners clearly varies from case to case, and could be far reaching.

In an attempt to include this important outcome in the analysis, we have used a proxy for the cost to women and their children (partners, and other family members have not been included in the analysis but there is clearly a loss here to them as well). We know that women that receive even one visit from their families in prison are three times more likely to have accommodation arranged on release and twice as likely to have employment or a training placement arranged.[86] We have used a percentage of the accommodation outcome, as well as the amount of their income that parents normally spend on their children, to generate a proxy.

Debt

One third of existing debt problems get worse on entering prison. We know from our interviews that the vast majority of women offenders have debts, some owing quite large amounts. We have assumed that each offender owed £1,000. This is well below the UK average, and as offenders are unlikely to have assets and related debts, but is still a conservative estimate. We have assumed that they have been unable to repay an APR of interest of 150 per cent on this debt as a result of their sentences and their consequent inability to earn income.

Women



Appendix 2
Asha Centre Model of Change

Background

The work of the Asha Centre is derived from work with women offenders in the local probation area between 1992 and 2001. This was based on a model of change that was developed from careful examination of the needs of women offenders and the issues affecting them. In due course dialogue with other organisations seeking to meet the needs of disadvantaged women led to the view that the issues were not necessarily specific to women offenders.

This has proved to be the case since the development of the Asha Centre, which has made it possible to compare the needs of women referred by different agencies. The issues identified by women referred to the Asha Centre as being of most concern to them match very closely (in type and prevalence) the needs that are found among populations of women offenders coming to the notice of the probation service.

What also became evident from local work with women offenders was that (perhaps because of the cumulative effect of their needs) they did not readily access community resources relevant to their needs, even at the level of a single need among many. Traditional probation methods sought to respond to this by making referrals or delivering relevant forms of help, but even this was not an adequate response to the concentration of need involved (combined with the profound lack of confidence and self–esteem that characterised most women offenders have experienced).

The local response in the probation service in the 1990s was to draw together in a single women–only centre a range of resources and a group work programme that addressed the imperatives of the model:

- Women–only because of the prevalence of reported experience of sexual and/or physical abuse among women offenders (at least 60 per cent). These experiences have profound effects on self–esteem and therefore upon personal development and functional capacity. Mental health problems are a common by–product. Victimisation of this kind is often only disclosed to other women, and an all–women environment therefore creates a safe place within which to tackle the consequences of such experiences. It also gives women confidence that their concerns will be understood and not ridiculed.

- A single centre (which in the Asha Centre has become a one–stop shop) in order to concentrate sufficient probation resources to develop an expert response. Probation staff arranged for women offenders from across Herefordshire and Worcestershire to travel to this centre, a logistical feat that most today would consider impossible. This was supplemented by local work with women offenders by their (women) supervising officers, based on the same model and methods.

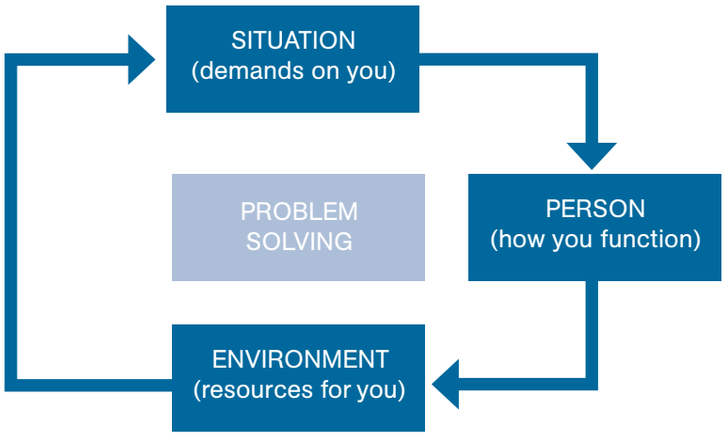
- Specific women–centred resources, in particular a crèche and a group programme. Other women's organisations were encouraged to deliver services there, and one – a rape and sexual abuse counselling service – was housed there. A prayer room was created for Muslim women, and kitchen facilities were available for centre users.

This approach to work with women offenders, while showing considerable promise, was very far from fitting in with dominant mainstream ideas about offending and how to respond to it. Although selected as a pathfinder for national accreditation, the local service developed for women offenders prior to 2001 was twice refused accreditation, and it was recognised that it was unlikely to survive the establishment of the National Offender Management Service. A group of probation staff and others decided to establish an independent charity, securing funding from the Government Office for the West Midlands. The Asha Centre was opened as a one–stop shop for disadvantaged women in 2002.

The model of change

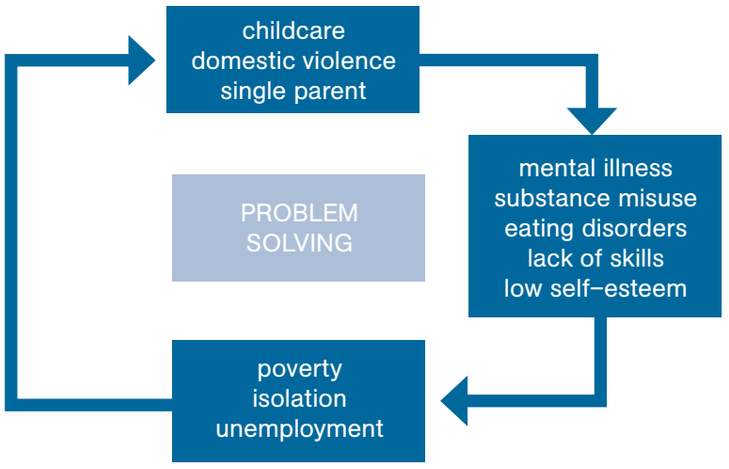
The model of change assumes that weakness in problem solving lies at the heart of women's offending/disadvantage, but also that this weakness is not necessarily resolved simply by improving problem–solving skills (which is more often the case with male offenders). It assumes that effective problem solving requires an adequate balance to be maintained between the way individuals function, the demands that are made upon them and the resources available to them (person, situation, environment) – see figure 1.

Figure1: The General Model for Change at an individual level



Where women are affected by multiple disadvantages, they are likely to be adversely affected in each of the three areas (functioning, demands and resources). Figure 2 identifies some of the specific needs and deficits that are most prevalent among disadvantaged women.

Figure 2: The Model of Change as experienced by disadvantaged women



It may be that women who are only disadvantaged in one or two of the areas shown above are capable of satisfactory problem solving, but it is clear that women with disadvantages in three areas need special provision to help them improve their capacity to solve their problems. As the arrows in the figures are meant to imply, the model includes strong interdependencies, and disadvantages in more than one area have a cumulative weakening effect on problem solving.

The resources element of the model is particularly important, firstly because needs in the other areas require access to resources, and yet it is very common for disadvantaged women to fail to seek help where this is available. We believe that this is for a number of reasons, including lack of self–worth, fear of rejection, fear of male staff, fear of authority, and fear that children will be removed. Another factor may be women's traditional roles as home makers and family carers, which can serve to limit their horizons.

It is worth noting that disadvantaged women often live in very disadvantaged areas, with little in the way of local resources to be accessed easily. They also face the added demands of protecting themselves and their dependents from high levels of crime. When low income, lack of personal transport and the demands of small children are factored in, it is perhaps not surprising that few of them have the resources required to seek the support they might benefit from.

Community resources are an essential tool in transforming the individual's capacity in relation to each of these interrelated elements. The aim, therefore, of the Asha Centre is expressed in its mission statement as follows:

"The Asha Centre aims to benefit women who are isolated by disadvantage from resources that will help them to achieve their potential. Through the provision of information, advice and opportunities it will strengthen their social and economic proficiency and reduce the risk of offending and exclusion."

Some resources are drawn into the Centre from other agencies – education and training, counselling, advice services – but it is also necessary to build up the women's confidence and self–esteem to enable them to use these resources effectively. It is also necessary to empower the women, to encourage them to develop sufficient self–worth to take control of their lives and set appropriate goals for themselves. It is worth noting that although qualified staff members are involved in assessment and review, much of the support that individual women receive comes from other women using the Centre, and sharing their experience. For some women this becomes formalised into volunteering and mentoring.

Although work with each woman follows an individual plan, it is possible to identify a process towards empowerment:

1. The development of a personal plan

2. Induction, designed to create confidence and give centre users a sense of control of over how they use the centre

3. Provision to build confidence and self esteem (primarily courses, but also opportunities to contribute to the work of the centre)

4. For some women, a counselling service is essential to deal with the consequences of victimisation or trauma, and without it they are unlikely to progress towards their potential

5. Skills development (responding mainly to very limited basic skills and poor educational attainment)

6. Empowerment and resources that support progression to mainstream opportunities (employment, further education and training, voluntary work).

Appendix 3
Theory of change for women offenders

Impact map by stakeholder

Stakeholder	Outcomes	Indicators
State	· Reduced Reoffending	· Fewer convictions · Benefit claimants avoided as employment opportunity increases · Social serviced and related activity avoided · Drug use reduced · Fewer attempted suicides
	· Reduced inter–generational exclusion	· Fewer convictions · Fewer behavioural problems · Less drug use · Fewer children become NEET
Women	· Reduced Reoffending	· Retention of employment · Loss of contact with family avoided · Loss of housing avoided · Drug use reduced/managed · Indebtedness reduced · Fewer attempted suicides
Children of those not reoffending	· Reduced inter–generational exclusion	· Fewer convictions · Fewer behavioural problems · Less drug use · Fewer children become NEET
Victims	· Reduced crime	· Fewer victims

Theory of change for women under community sentences

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
Adequate funding from government or others funders	Group work towards understanding and dealing with offending behaviour	Women offenders required to attend programmes at community–based centres as part of their community sentences	Women able to rebuild their lives in a fulfilling, law–abiding way
Committed and trained staff	Development of a personal plan for each woman to address her particular needs and circumstances	Achievement of goals/ targets in women's personal plans	Increased confidence and self–esteem
Woman–centred approach	Drug and alcohol detoxification facilities & programmes (e.g. methodone)	Women completing drug or alcohol detoxification programmes	Healthy relationships with others (including children, partners, family members, friends and others)
Appropriate buildings and facilities	One–to–one support	Women completing courses to understand their offending behaviour and develop skills and abilities	Reduced likelihood of women reoffending
Relationships with mainstream services (e.g. NHS, local authority housing departments)	Access to mainstream services, including housing, health care, money/debt management	Women accessing the mainstream services they need	Women drug/alcohol–free or able to keep their drug/alcohol use under control
Relationships with probation prisons and the courts	Other group work and activities (e.g. training courses, outings) to develop individual and social abilities and skills		Improved physical, mental and emotional health
Women's abilities, resources and willingness to make changes in their lives			Women in their own accommodation
			Women able to deal with financial/debt issues, legal issues, etc.
			Women able to make decisions and plans about education, training and employment opportunities

Appendix 4
Summary calculations

Stakeholder	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 11	Year 12	Year 13	Year 14	Year 15	Year 16	Year 17	Year 18	Year 19	Year 20
Women	2659145	2659145	2659145	2659145	2659145	2659145	2659145	2659145										
Children									1137835	1137835	1137835	1137835	1137835	1137835	1137835	1137835	1137835	1137835
Victims	228758	228758	228758	228758	228758	228758	228758	228758										
State (re children)									924945	924945	924945	924945	924945	924945	924945	924945	924945	924945
State (re women)	5396266	5396266	5396266	5396266	5396266	5396266	5396266	5396266	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	8284169	8284169	8284169	8284169	8284169	8284169	8284169	8284169	2062780	2062780	2062780	2062780	2062780	2062780	2062780	2062780	2062780	2062780
Total to State	5396266	5396266	5396266	5396266	5396266	5396266	5396266	5396266	924945	924945	924945	924945	924945	924945	924945	924945	924945	924945

Cost (low end)	5808000
Cost (high end)	58080000

103469489

NPV Total	£81,057,897.94
NPV (State)	£50,331,900.44
SR	£13.96
SR (State)	£8.67

Total 1 year	£8,284,169.13
SR	£1.43
State 1 year	£5,396,265.91
SR	£0.93

Appendix 5
Assumptions, proxies and sources

Stakeholder	Outcome	Beneficiaries (outcome)	Objectives	Beneficiaries (indicator)	Benchmark	DW	Source	Net	Financial Proxy	Source	Unit Cost	Total
State re women	Reduced Reoffending	116	Fewer convictions	116	Reoffending Rate	0.64	HO Statistical Bulletin : Re–offending of adults: results from the 2004 cohort)	74	Non CJS costs of two crimes avoided	Home Office Study on marginal costs divided by four – no non–custodial costs included	5100	379146
			Benefit claimants avoided as employment opportunity increases	82	n/a	1.00	Assuming 100% – unlikely to keep job post conviction	82	Savings from employment of tax, benefit & productivity	Research by Mark Hoban M.P (Mar 07)	18600	1534009
			Social serviced and related activity avoided	116	n/a	1.00	Assume 100%	116 11	Cost of intervening in offenders family (social services etc.)	Social Exclusion Unit	25000	2904000
			Loss of housing avoided	11	n/a	1.00	Assume 100%		Emergency accomodation avoided (3 months)	St. Mungos (see endnote)	6750	77624
			Drug use reduced	77	Low income groups	0.84	Scottish Drugs Forum http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/information/mental–health–overview/statistics/#howmany	64	Proportion of rehab costs	Home Office Study[87]	7374	474878
			Fewer attempted suicides	43	UK average	0.75		32	NHS costs		5616	181028
State re Children of those not reoffending	Reduced inter–generational exclusion	77		69	Children in care	0.90	DCSF	62	Cost of crime	As above	5100	316706
				25	Children in care	0.55	http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/hel0603.pdf	14	Cost of mental health	**nef** interim briefing[88]	5616	78146
				2	Children in care	0.95	DCSF	2	Proportion of rehab costs	(as above)	7374	16112
				18	Children in care	0.80	DCSF	14	Avoiding NEET	**nef** interim briefing	11730	165469

Stakeholder	Outcome	Beneficiaries (outcome)	Objectives	Beneficiaries (indicator)	Benchmark	DW	Source	Net	Financial Proxy	Source	Unit Cost	Total
Women	Reduced reoffending	116.16	Retention of employment	82	n/a	1.00	Assuming 100% unlikely to keep job post conviction	82	Income – minimum wage less tax	NSO	18600	1534009
			Loss of contact with family avoided	50	n/a	1.00	Assume 100% Assume 100%	50	1 visit twice as likely to have training place and 3 times as likely to have accomodation arranged	Action for prisoners Families/PRT	4200	209784
			Loss of housing avoided	11	n/a	1.00	Scottish Drugs Forum	11	Accomodation arranged 3 months rent (bed sit in housing association)	St. Mungos	4000	45999
			Drug use reduced/ managed	77	Low income groups	0.58	Assume 100%	44	Cost of maintaining a drug habit	Drugscope[89]	16500.00	733690
			Indebtedness reduced	35	n/a	1.00		35	Average debt change	SEU report on indebtness – baselines interviews with Asha/218	1500.00	52272
			Fewer attempted suicides	43	UK average	0.75	http://www.mental health.org.uk/mental-health-overview/ statistics/#howmany	32	Mental health costs	Counseling and health insurance[90]	2587	83390
Children of those not reoffending	Reduced inter-generational exclusion	77	Fewer convictions	69	Children in care	0.90	DCSF	62	Children of prisoners are three times as likely to mental health problems as average		6000	372595
			Fewer mental health problems	25	Children in care	0.55	http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/helD603.pdf	14		Philbrick, 1996 (see endnote 80)	2587	35998
			Less drug use	2	Children in care	0.95	DCSF	2		**nef** assumption	16500	36052
			Fewer children become NEET	59	Children in care	0.80	DCSF	47		**nef** assumption	12584	594292
			Contact with parents maintained	33	n/a	1.00	Assume 100%	33	10% of mental health costs	**nef** assumption	3000	98899
Victims	Reduced crime	116	Fewer victims, two thefts per victim	116	Reoffending rate	0.64	HO Statistical Bulletin: Re-offending of adults(results from the 2004 cohort)	74	Cost of two thefts to household and individual	**nef** assumption	1688	125490

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[7] Although there has been an increase in the levels of funding for both probation and prison services, the rate of increase for probation has been twice that for prisons. Increases in these areas have coincided with increases into other areas of public services such has health and education.

[8] For example, the Justice Committee recently opened a web forum asking the public how the justice budget should be spent.

[9] Once there was evidence that social casework with prisoners could have an impact on reconvictions, but that kind of work no longer exists in prisons.

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[50] News stories about targets, particularly waiting lists make regular headlines, and it the impact of targets was the subject of a select committee enquiry in 2002/3.

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[53] Juliet Lyon, Prison Reform Trust. Oral Evidence to Justice Committee, Justice Reinvestment,24 June 2008.

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[55] Academic work on this theme refers to *desistance* from crime, i.e. a focus on the factors explaining why individuals desist from criminal activity rather than why they re–offend.

[56] It is estimated that each new prison place costs £119,000 and that the annual average cost for each prisoner exceeds £40,000.

[57] For example, government spending on enterprise–related services in deprived communities in 2001 was around £2.5 billion.

[58] Justice Reinvestment takes the view that money that would have been spent on prisons and criminal justice should be reinvested in better education and social programmes to address the causes of crime (see Allen and Stern, 2007).

[59] Since we conducted this analysis, outcomes data on education and training from the Asha Centre have become available (see box on page 24)

[60] The unit costs for community provision that we have used are £3,000 per person per intervention. The current average unit costs at Asha, based on an average live caseload of 100, is just over £2,000. It is possible that the most expensive cases cost closer to £3,000, and it could also be argued that a substantial caseload of women offenders should attract more resources. At the same time we did not include the costs of probation supervision – for example, for women referred to Asha by the local probation service. It could be argued that a community model should include these costs, which amount to an estimated £1,000 per offender per year.

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[63] The mean day service cost is £5,731 and the mean residential cost is £10,161. See Loucks et al (2006).

[64] It was remarked during this research that while policy makers talk of housing and accommodation needs, a sense of home (rather than merely housing) was important to women. For the women interviewed this sense of home was a factor in their sense of efficacy and self–worth.

[65] Costs to victims assume two thefts per victim in the year analysed. This is based on Home Office calculations, and includes the psychological impacts on victims, which are relatively low as we are looking at non–violent crime.

[66] See Appendix 1 for detail.

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[90] Devised from averages taken during 2008; £800 health insurance, £372 gym membership, 1,600 days lost through ill–health (average industrial wage). http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/overall/hssh0506.pdf

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