

Progressive practices in women's imprisonment: An international perspective

**International Symposium to consider the future direction of
custody for women in Scotland**

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Overview

- Briefly summarise some emerging areas of good practice in relation to women's imprisonment (c.f. Bartels and Gaffney, 2011)
- Consider the drivers of reform and their implications for policy transfer
- What wider questions need to be considered in taking forward discussions?

Location and design

- Urban location to facilitate
 - access to services
 - access for visitors
- Good public transport links
- Cottage style living
 - Shared responsibility for budgeting, planning meals, cooking, household tasks
 - increased privacy
- Individual living units
- Use of design and technology to control movement of women requiring security or protection



Location and design

- Need for natural light, fresh air, privacy, space and access to land
- Environmentally sustainable developments
- Spacious design with clear separation between segregated areas (with the latter kept to a minimum)
- Outdoor spaces for walking, group conversations and self reflection
- Facilities to accommodate women with disabilities and visual or hearing impairments

Location and design



**Boronia Pre-Release Centre for Women,
Western Australia**

Management and operation

- Takes as starting point the distinctiveness of women's needs
- Minimum percentages of female officers and circumscribed roles for male officers
- Getting balance right between drug demand, supply and harm reduction strategies
- 'Structured day' – work, education, visits (official and social), medical appointments, recreation, personal time

Management and operation

- Informed by relevant theories
 - Pathways
 - Relational
 - Trauma
 - Addictions
- Gives specific attention to gender specific needs in terms of
 - Reception
 - Transportation
 - Physical and mental health
 - Education, employment and programmes
 - Security
 - Pregnancy and parenting

Programmes and services

- Holistic programmes and services that are able to address women's complex needs:
 - Housing, parenting, relationships, trauma, financial management, independent living, legal, physical and mental health, drug and alcohol, re-integration
- Networks established with local community provide
 - services while in prison
 - support on release
- Availability of female-centric recreation programmes

Programmes and services

- Employment and educational programmes that:
 - Enable women to gain skills in non-traditional areas
 - Are geared to the external job market
 - Café facilities run by prisoners



Call Centre, Dillwynia Correctional Centre for Women, New South Wales



Gloria Jean Café, Dillwynia CCW

Health

- **Kiev Declaration (2009)**
 - Comprehensive and detailed screening in admission
 - Individualised care, treatment and development plan
 - Primary health care services
 - specialist health care
 - Pre-release preparation
- **Recognition that women have more complex physical and mental health needs**
 - Enhanced access to relevant mental health services (e.g. Marmak Centre, DPF Vic.)
- **Special needs of older women in prison need to be considered separately**

Security and classification

- Women should not be classified as maximum security
- Remand prisoners should be treated with minimum necessary restrictions commensurate with security, safety and order
- Need to recognise the tendency for ‘generic’ assessment tools to over-classify women
- Need for policies and service to be trauma informed
 - Recognising adverse impact of strip searching women
- Halfway houses/transitional centres for phased reintegration

Women as parents

- Facilities and policies to accommodate the needs of children include:
 - Purpose built visitor centres and improved visiting areas
 - Indoor and outdoor play areas
 - Mother and child units
 - Whose decision?
 - Community links
 - External mother and baby units (Spain)
 - Occasional residency programmes

Women as parents



**Children's play area in the family department and
playground in the visitors' area
Horserød State Prison, Denmark**

Drivers of progress/reform

- International directives
 - UN Rules (Bangkok Rules)
 - UNODC and WHO Kiev Declaration (2009) on Women's Health in Prison
- Policy interest
 - Rising rates of imprisonment and its consequences
 - Scandal driven
- Normative
 - Nordic countries

The Scottish context

- Rise in female imprisonment (under sentence and remand)
- Majority of women convicted of offences that are relatively minor and receive short prison sentences
- Majority of female prisoners are arguably more *at risk* than *risky*
- Hostile and punitive media (and public/political attitudes?)

Concluding questions

- How should 'custody' in Scotland be conceptualised and operationalised?
- What should be the underlying philosophy/aims/normative perspective?
- What principle and methods should underpin the classification, allocation and 'treatment' of women?
- How might technology be harnessed to minimise intrusiveness and enhance communication?
- What lessons can be learned from other jurisdictions and how might policy transfer be influenced by public/media/judicial/political attitudes