



# **'From Vision to Reality – Transforming Scotland's Care of Women in Custody'**

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## Parliamentary Activities

Member of the Conveners Group

**Recent Speeches**   **Recent Voting**   **Recent Motions**   **Recent Questions**

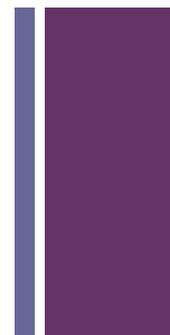
To ask the Scottish Government whether the construction of a women's prison at Greenock will take place as proposed.

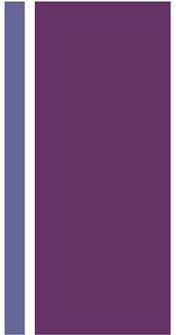
**Answered by Michael Matheson (26/01/2015):**  
I have decided that the current plans for a prison for women in Inverclyde should not go ahead. The proposals do not fit with my vision of how to address female offending, and I have taken the view that a more ambitious approach is required.

I have instructed Scottish Government and Scottish Prison Service officials to undertake a period of extensive engagement with key partners, with a view to investing in smaller regional and community-based custodial facilities across the country.

The Justice Committee have been informed of this decision, and I will be announcing the decision publically later today.

**Current Status: Answered by Michael Matheson on 26/01/2015**





# Women in Prison: A Snap Shot

## ■ Women's Prison Population's in Scotland - 15<sup>th</sup> May 2015

297 Sentenced

Female Adults

76 Untried

Female Adults

6 Untried

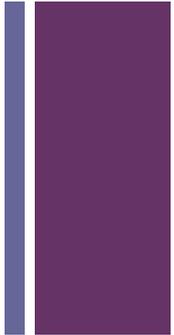
Female Young Offenders

13 Sentenced

Female Young Offenders



# A Better Way



Divert low-level female offenders away from the criminal justice system wherever possible, and channel those convicted of low-level offences towards non-custodial community-based services.

Reducing the use of Remand

Ensuring that bail supervision schemes are made available consistently across Scotland was a recommendation in the CWO report

Reducing the use of short term sentences

Sustainable resourcing of community-based services



# Thinking about desistance...and best practice to facilitate desistance

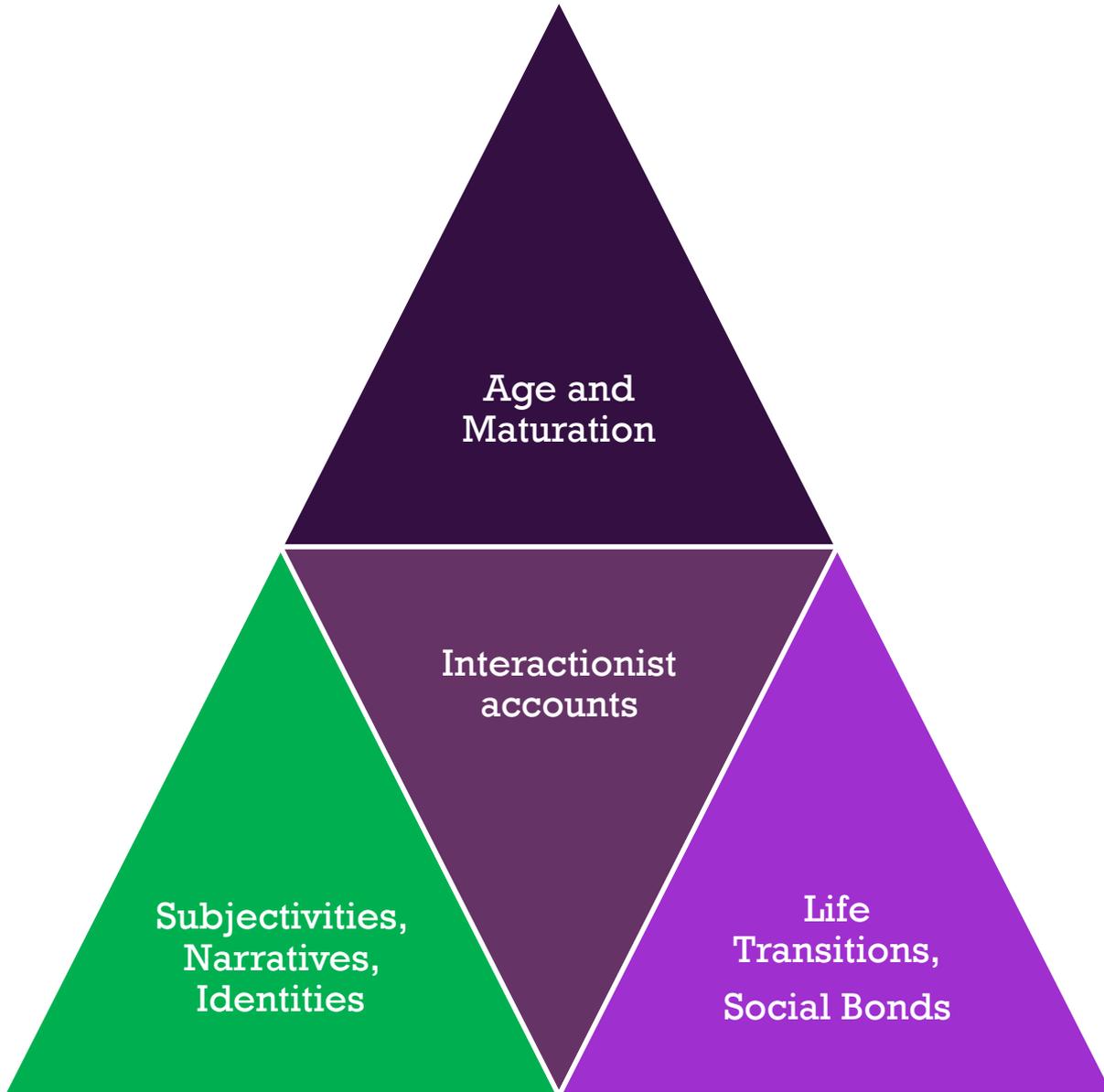
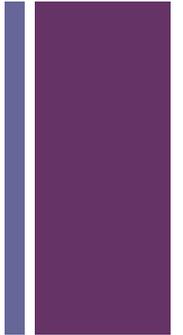


- 1) The concept of desistance
- 2) What do we know about women's needs?
- 3) What do we know about women's needs
- 4) What do we know about what helps/supports women in their journeys towards desistance?
- 5) What can we learn from community based projects and services?
- 6) What are the lessons for the way in which women might be treated in custody?

# + 1) Conceptualising desistance

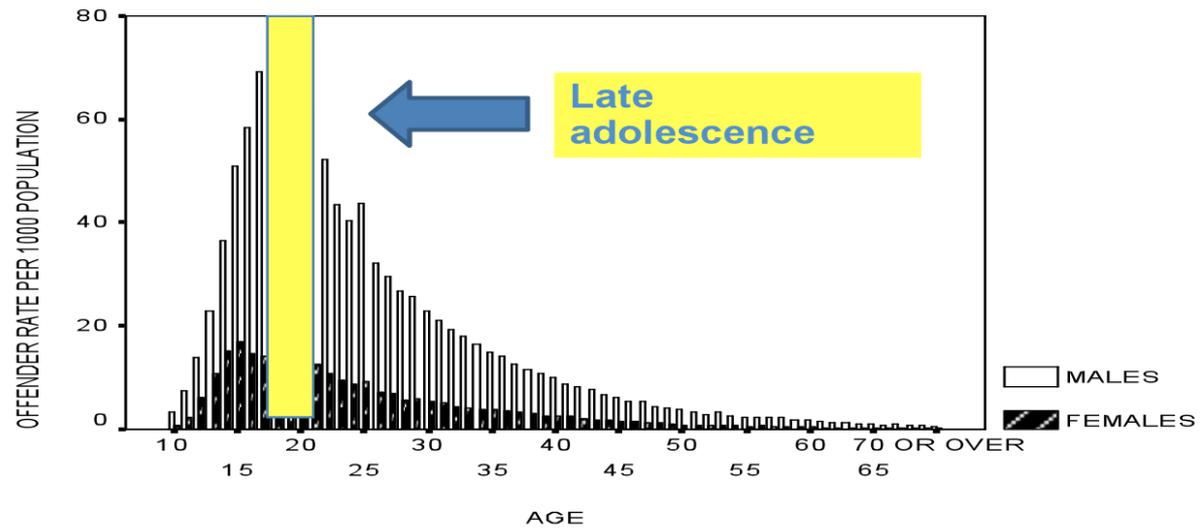
## Some preliminaries: conceptualising desistance

- Stopping **and** refraining from offending
- Spontaneous or '**natural**' desistance
- **Assisted desistance** (and what works)
- **Primary and secondary desistance**
- **The problems of measuring desistance**





## The age-crime curve



Source: Recorded Offender Rates per 1,000 Relevant Population by Age-year and Sex, England and Wales, 2000

## + Key aspects of desistance journeys: they are hard...

- People's resources for the journey are often limited
- Their **change pathways** are often blocked
- Temptation and provocation...
- They are complex processes, not events, characterised by **ambivalence and vacillation**
- They involve **re-biography** (at the time or post hoc); changing identities (narratives); more than learning new cognitive skills
- Prompted by life events, depending on the **meaning** of those events for the offender; inherently subjective, hence individualised, **sensitive to difference/diversity**



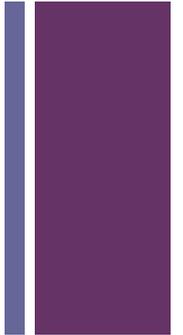
## Key aspects of desistance journeys



- Solicited or sustained by someone ‘believing in’ the offender (or prevented by someone giving up on the offender?)... **Hope**
- An active process in which **agency** is discovered and exercised
- Requires **social capital** (opportunities) as well as human capital (capacities/skills)
- Desistance reinforced through ‘**redemption**’ or restoration (de-labelling); finding purpose in **generative activities** (constructive reparation)

## **+ 2) What do we know about women offenders and their crime related needs?**

- Consistent messages from research literature, from experienced service providers and service users
- Unmet needs in relation to sexual and violent victimisation
- Unmet needs in relation to physical and mental health (including the impact of traumatic events and experiences)
- Unmet needs in relation to housing and income
- Unmet needs in relation to training and employment
- Substance abuse





## What do we know about women offenders?



- Victimization -> Less Resilience -> Risk
- Victimization creates ‘psychological sequelae’ which can lead to offending behaviour
- In the language of ‘capital’ – low human and social capital
- Women who offend are often driven to do so not by ‘cognitive behavioural deficits’ but by the complexity of the demands made upon them (Worrall, 2002: 144)

### + 3) Is desistance different for women?

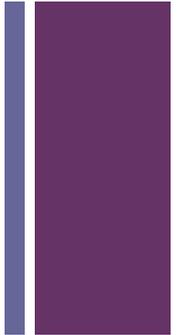
- *Systematic review* of the literature: catalogues -> screen by words -> screen by abstract -> full article/report screen = 45 items > 17 articles/reports eligible. (Of the 45 some failed to distinguish between men and women)
- Small scale studies
- Cross-cultural differences
- The need for meta-analyses
- The importance of participating in research – to build up a picture

## + Examples of studies...

- Bui and Morash (2010) *The Impact of Network Relationships, Prison Experiences, and Internal Transformation on Women's Success After Prison* 20 interviews with women on parole (USA study)
  - > *material resources (housing and finance/dealing with debts)*
  - > *ending abusive relationships*
  - > *time with pro-social friends*
- Cobbina (2010) *Reintegration Success and Failure* (file study + interviews of 50 women; USA)
  - > *stable positive family, practical support with finances and childcare*
  - > *being listened to, encouraged + practical help re finding jobs*
  - > *access to post release services (help with housing, managing money)*

## + Cobbina continued...hinderances to desistance

- *Difficult to sever ties with other family members who were offending and abusive partners*
- *Lack of attention from parole officers (probation officers) who had very large caseloads*
- *The variety of competing demands for time and energy upon release from prison*



+ Brown and Ross (2010) Engendering Desistance from Crime (Australian study)

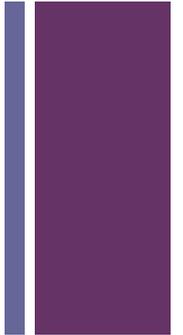
■ Study based on 25 mentees and 26 mentors.

■ Conclusions point to the benefits of mentoring:

- personal agency

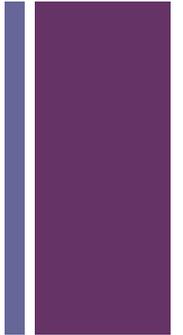
- dealing with shame

- shaping a 'replacement self'





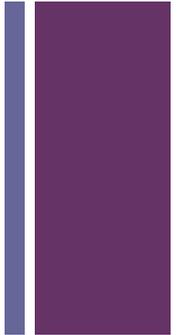
# McIvor, Sheehan & Trotter, 2009



- Based on interviews with 69 women 12 months after their release from prison in Australia (only 23 claimed to have been desisting after 12 months)
  - success or failure in dealing with drug addiction determined success or otherwise regarding desistance
  - self-efficacy of the women
  - support from family

+ 'Is desistance from crime different for girls?'  
McIvor, Murray and Jamieson (2004) in Maruna &  
Immarigeon (eds) *After Crime and Punishment:  
Pathways to offender reintegration*

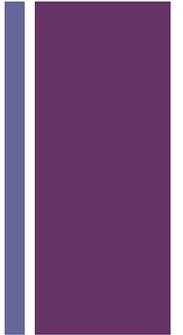
- Study 138 young women and 138 young men
- 14-15, 18-19, 22-25 years olds – self reports and interviews
- Samples drawn from two Scottish towns
- Females – more likely to cite moral rationales for stopping offending than males (image of being law abiding)
- Females more likely to emphasise the relational aspects of desistance
- Dissociation from offending peers important for the young women



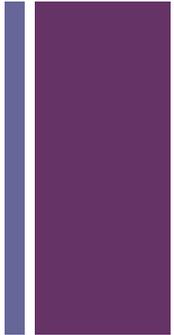
## + 4) What do we know about what helps women/supports women in their journeys towards desistance: **Common themes**

- Human agency ('resolve' and timing)
- Supportive relationships (emotionally and materially supportive relationships which encourage interdependence)
- Severing relationships with abusive partners/offending peers....
- Understanding and acknowledging trauma... (environment -> relationships -> services and supervision -> opportunities to change -> comprehensive and collaborative community services)

# + Common themes



- Dealing with practical problems
- Reasons to stop offending & ways to continue desistance
- Women's ways of learning...

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- + 5) What can we learn from community based projects and services?: Nine lessons drawn from research (Gelsthorpe, 2010).

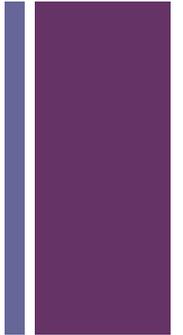
## The benefits of centres and services for women

1. **Women centred**
2. **Mixed provision (offenders and non-offenders)**
3. **Focus on empowerment**
4. **Use of effective learning styles**
5. **Holistic stance**
6. **Facilitate links with mainstream agencies**
7. **Provision for 'top ups'**
8. **Supportive milieu**
9. **Practical help with transport and childcare**

# + The potential of women's community services to promote desistance

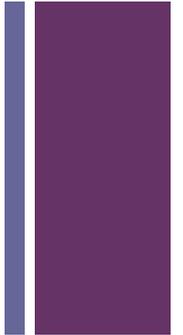
- Supportive relationships
- Pro-social modelling
- Learning new skills/new ways of being
- Practical management of life
- Empowerment
- Positive psychology

Potential for women's centres to contribute to desistance (by meeting their probation officers/offender managers there even...). Lessons from Centre 218





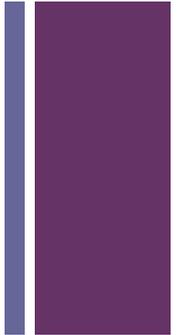
## What we know *and don't know about work with women offenders*



1. Models of change –more theorising
2. Consistency in monitoring and evaluation
3. Intermediate outcomes – distance travelled
4. Measuring change within individual support plans
5. Comparison and control groups (e.g. non starters following referral to Together Women)
6. Reconvictions (data collection & data cleansing)...the limitation of snapshots and the need to show the process of changes (See Jolliffe et al., 2011 MoJ 11/11)



## 6) What lessons we can draw for the custodial treatment of women....?



- Holistic approaches (offending may be the least of women's problems...)
- Relational theory
- Supportive milieu
- Positive psychology
- Empowerment
- Sensitivity to trauma...acknowledging trauma and not repeating it via the custodial experience – being aware of 'triggers' e.g. (searches, seclusion and restraint)



# Becoming trauma and gender informed...

- Safety, Trustworthiness, Choice, Collaboration, Empowerment

(See the work of *Dr Stephanie Covington*:

<http://www.stephaniecovington.com/books-and-curricula.php>)

- **What is needed to facilitate desistance during the custodial experience?**

# + Useful references...

- Bottoms, A.E. and Shapland, J. (2011) Steps towards desistance among male young adult recidivists in S. Farrall, M. Hough, S. Maruna and R. Sparks (eds) *Escape routes: contemporary perspectives on life after punishment*. (Routledge, pp. 43-80).
- Gelsthorpe, L. 'Working with women offenders in the community: A view from England and Wales' in R. Sheehan, G. Mclvor and C. Trotter (eds. *Working with Women in the Community*. Willan Publishing, pp 127-50)
- Gelsthorpe, L. (2010) 'What works with women offenders?' in *Transnational Criminology Manual* (vol. 3) edited by M. Herzog-Evans (Wolf Legal Publishers pp 223-40)
- Mclvor, G., Sheehan, R. and Trotter, C. (2009) 'Women, resettlement and desistance', *Probation Journal*, 56, 4, pp 347-61
- Rungay, J. (2004) 'Scripts for safer survival: Pathways out of female crime', *Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 43, pp405-19)