



Community Leadership and Libraries Committee

6 October 2021

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| Title | London's Blueprint for a Whole System Approach for Women in Contact with the Criminal Justice System 2019-22 |
| Report of | Chairman of the Community Leadership and Libraries Committee |
| Wards | All |
| Status | Non-Key |
| Urgent | No |
| Key | No |
| Enclosures | None |
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Summary

This report provides an update to the report to committee on 20 November 2019 and which set out the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime ambition for all London boroughs to sign up to London's Blueprint for a Whole System Approach for Women in Contact with the Criminal Justice System 2019-22. The Blueprint aims to develop and implement an evidence based, sustainable, whole-system approach aimed at improving outcomes for women and reducing women's imprisonment.

Officers Recommendations

That CLLC note the pan-London progress against the Blueprint aims

That CLLC note the local actions to strengthen this workstream in Barnet

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 To provide an update to Committee on the developments and implementation of the pan-London Blueprint for Women in Contact with the Criminal Justice System 2019-22 since Barnet signed up to the initiative following agreement at Committee on 20 November 2019.

2. Background context

- 2.1 The UK has one of the highest rates of women's imprisonment in Western Europe. The women's prison population in England and Wales has been steadily increasing since 1995. Whilst the proportion of women in the criminal justice system only accounts for approximately 5% of the prison population and 15% of offenders in the community, there is a need to address women's complex needs. In the UK, 53% of women in prison report having experienced emotional, physical or sexual abuse as a child compared to 27% of men and 57% of women report having been victims of domestic violence as adults, although this figure is likely to be underestimated due to under-reporting. 58% of women in prison will have dependent children and they are almost twice as likely to be sent to prison for a first-time offence than men.
- 2.2 The Ministry of Justice published a national Female Offender Strategy in June 2018 which lays out the case for taking a gender specific approach to women who offend or are at risk of offending and for using community solutions to tackle minor offending by women. 70.7% of adult women and released from custody between April to June 2016 following a short custodial sentence of less than 12 months reoffended within a year.
- 2.3 In 2019, the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) worked alongside the Prison Reform Trust and key partners to develop the London Blueprint for Women in Contact with the Criminal Justice System, referred to as the 'Blueprint' hereafter with the aim of setting out a clear and shared vision for multi-agency transformation of responses to women in the criminal justice system in London.
- 2.4 Recognising the common underlying causes of offending for women, including domestic abuse, modern day slavery, homelessness and mental health and substance misuse, the Blueprint sets out the commitment to transform the criminal justice response to women in London by aligning preventative and community-based alternatives to custody for women who present with a low risk of harm
- 2.5 MOPAC sent a letter seeking organisational sign up to the Blueprint on 8 July 2019, the agreement was signed off by Community Leadership and Libraries Committee on 20 November 2019 with the intention of developing an action plan over the following six months with a cross-sector Blueprint Delivery Group made up of the Blueprint's key signatories and chaired by MOPAC's Director of Criminal Justice and Commissioning and reports to the Reducing Reoffending Board which in turn reports to the Delivery Management Group, chaired by the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, and the London Crime Reduction Board, chaired by the Mayor of London.

- 2.6 The Blueprint action plan intends to provide the foundation for agencies to map provision and highlight gaps in order to coordinate allocation of resources and provide the foundation for longer-term sustainability of holistic, trauma-informed and women-centred approaches throughout the criminal justice process and in the delivery of early prevention and intervention services.
- 2.7 The over-arching aims of the Blueprint are to:
- Reduce the number of women in prison, particularly on remand and on short custodial sentences
 - Improve access to support services for women in prison
 - Ensure there is sufficient funding and investment in community services for women in contact with the criminal justice system or at risk of such contact
 - Increase and improve opportunities for early intervention and diversion.
- 2.8 The aims further include reducing risk of homelessness as set out in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, particularly in preparing women for resettlement into the community and ensuring the best interests of children are considered. The Blueprint has a focus on considering the needs and impact on children of mothers who are involved in the criminal justice system.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 For committee recognise progress made against the ambitions of the Blueprint in the context of Covid-19 restrictions and note the commitment of the local authority to achieving a cohesive local model of delivery that improves outcomes for women involved in the criminal justice system.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

- 4.1 To cease engagement with the Blueprint Action Plan and co-commissioned provider (not recommended)

5. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 5.1 To deliver against the aims of the Blueprint action plan, the Advance Minerva WrapAround service was funded via the MOPAC co-commissioning grant to deliver enhanced support to women and girls, aged 15 and above with multiple and complex needs who have committed crime and those at risk of re-offending. The service operates as a whole system response across to women in contact with the criminal justice system across 29 London boroughs, including Barnet.

- 5.2 Minerva work in a whole system approach, collaborating with statutory and non-statutory providers, to deliver a coordinated and gendered response, improving access to services, enabling consistency and continuity of support with the aim of increasing safety and improving confidence, self-esteem and life skills. The Service receives referrals from the National Probation Service (NPS), local authorities, health providers, voluntary sector agencies and self-referrals.
- 5.3 Advance and its partners provide one-to-one support and access to peer mentors, women with lived experience of the criminal justice system, who can provide one-to-one ad hoc and regular support to women. There are three regional Women's Centres in north, east and west London offering spaces for groupwork and one-to-one support. Barnet has access to the centre in Haringey. The service offers support from a housing co-ordinator, and workshops and groups delivered by specialist organisations with expertise in financial management, mental health and domestic abuse.
- 5.4 Minerva, through its keyworker, relationship and strengths-based approach aims to empower women to break the cycle of reoffending. The approach recognises the trauma that many women in the criminal justice system have experienced and provides for a safe, reliable and trusted relationship with a supportive professional. Alongside, practical support is provided including support to make applications, making and attending appointments, referrals for additional support and advocacy with housing, mental health and children's services.
- 5.5 Over 2020, Minvera Advance reported that 68% of women referred engaged with services and of these
- 93% of women said that they felt safer from abuse
 - 86% young women (15-24 years old) reported healthier relationships
 - 72% of women reported more confidence in gaining employment
 - 82% of women reported improved health and well-being
 - 87% of women using reported reduction in drug and alcohol use
- 5.6 There are currently 8 borough-specific hubs, in collaboration with Local Authorities, where women can be supported in their communities; this initiative has not been developed in Barnet. The reducing reoffending workstream transferred to Family Services in May 2021, there is now a developing plan to investigate the need and align local strategies and delivery in children's services, reducing reoffending, youth offending and domestic abuse and VAWG with the Minerva Advance approach.
- 5.7 The Barnet Reducing Offending Delivery Action Plan (BRODAP 2018-2022) sits under the Barnet Reducing Offending Strategy and reports to the Reducing Reoffending Delivery Group which reports to the Community Safety Partnership Board. There are six

strategic priorities set out within the BRODAP but these are not specific to women. A review of female offending in Barnet is currently underway to ascertain the level of local need which will inform further how the ambitions of the Blueprint are implemented in Barnet. The volume of girls in the Youth Justice system is relatively low, the size and complexity of the cohort girls and women in the criminal justice system will help shape an appropriate delivery model.

- 5.8 Family Services will coordinate a stakeholder meeting to explore the findings of the data and agree a local plan for coordinated delivery.

6. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

6.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

The Council's Corporate Plan 2019-24 sets out three main outcomes:

- 1) A pleasant well-maintained borough that we protect and invest in
- 2) Our residents live happy healthy independent lives with the most vulnerable protected
- 3) Safe and strong communities where people get along

- 6.2 Six key priorities have been set to support the delivery of the third outcome.

- Keeping Barnet safe
- Tackling anti-social behaviour and environmental crime
- Celebrating our diverse and strong communities and taking a zero tolerance approach to hate crime
- Ensuring we are a family friendly borough
- Focusing on the strengths of the community and what they can do to help themselves and each other
- Supporting local businesses to thrive

- 6.3 The aims of the Blueprint will be embedded into Barnet's Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy and Reducing Reoffending Strategy.

- 6.4 The VAWG Strategy and Reducing Reoffending support progress aim to support the priorities set out in the corporate plan by helping to keep residents of Barnet safe and protecting the most vulnerable.

7. Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

- 7.1 There are no current financial implications associated with the recommendations of this

report.

8. Legal and Constitutional References

- 8.1 Under s.17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, it is a duty of the Council (and other partner agencies, including Police, Fire & Rescue, Greater London Authority, Transport for London) when exercising its functions to have due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder (including anti-social behaviour), misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances and re-offending.
- 8.2 Section 10 of the Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014 amended the Offender Management Act 2007, placing a duty on the Secretary of State for Justice to ensure that arrangements for supervision or rehabilitation identify specific need and so make appropriate provision for women.
- 8.3 The BSCP is a Community Safety Partnership set up in accordance with the requirement of the section 5 Crime and Disorder Act 1998 as amended by section 108 of the Policing and Crime Act 2009.
- 8.4 The Terms of Reference of CLLC in Barnet's Constitution states that the Committee acts 'as the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the Police and Justice Act 2006 (Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny Regulations) 2009'.

9. Insight

N/A

10. Social Value

- 10.1 The cost of offending and reoffending is set out in the 2018 Home Office report on the Economic and Social Cost of Crime (2nd edition). The report followed a cohort of offenders identified in 2016 who subsequently went on to reoffend during the 12-month follow up. The total estimated economic and social cost of reoffending was £18.1 billion. In addition, there is a further personal, familial and community cost which impacts on the lives of individuals, children and families and the communities that they live in.
- 10.2 48% of adults that spend time in prison go on to reoffend within 12-months of release. Prison does not treat offending and does not prevent reoffending (Ministry of Justice, 2019 'Proven reoffending statistics': April – June 2017)
- 10.3 Reducing reoffending seeks to minimise the harm caused and create opportunities for social integration, family cohesion and community engagement. For women, particularly those who are primary carers for children, the value in supporting those women to escape cycles of abuse, victimisation and offending may also mean providing a child(ren) with improved opportunities to grow up in their own family and to enjoy

healthy and reliable contact with a primary carer.

11.Risk Management

- 11.1.1 The partnership or appropriate agencies are made aware of risks and actions to mitigate the risk are agreed and put in place. There is always risk that the partnership may not achieve the targets set due to factors outside its direct control – however there is strong partnership working in place enabling agencies to identify and highlight risk and be open to addressing the risk collectively.

12.Equalities and Diversity

- 12.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 sets out the public-sector equality duty to which the authority must have due regard. The Council's public-sector equality duty is set out in s149 of the Equality Act 2010:
- 12.2 A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to —
a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act; b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 12.3 The relevant protected characteristics are age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex and sexual orientation. The Barnet Safer Communities Strategy and the services delivered as part of this strategy take into account the protected characteristics to ensure services are accessible and fair to all sections of the community.
- 12.4 MOPAC have undertaken a commitment to preparing an equality impact assessment through scrutiny of outcomes for women from racially minoritised backgrounds, women with disabilities, of different faiths and those who identify as LGBTQ as part of the Blueprint action plan.

13.Corporate Parenting

- 13.1 Young women in care and leaving care may have adverse childhood experiences that may make them susceptible to grooming and coercion as such may be at an increased risk of becoming involved with the criminal justice system. The Blueprint action plan locally will ensure cohesive overlap with Corporate Parenting Services, transitional safeguarding and transitions and resettlement planning for young people involved with Youth Offending Services and transitioning to National Probation Services.

14.Consultation and Engagement

14.1 Barnet's VAWG Strategy 2021 – 2023 is currently out to public and stakeholder consultation. Feedback will inform the development of the strategy which will be presented to the Safer Communities Partnership Board in January 2022 for sign off.

15. BACKGROUND PAPERS

[\(Public Pack\) MOPAC Blueprint for whole systems approach to women in contact with the criminal justice system](#)
[Agenda Supplement for Community Leadership and Libraries Committee, 20/11/2019 19:00 \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)