



**Time for a radical new approach for women and girls:  
The National Women's Justice Coalition calls on government to create  
a new Women's Justice Board**

With a prison and probation system in crisis, deepening poverty and stark health inequalities, the [National Women's Justice Coalition](#) (NWJC) is calling on the government to create a Women's Justice Board to deliver a radically different approach to women and girls caught up in the criminal justice system.

Abbi Ayers, Director of Strategic Development for the NWJC, said:

*"We have a criminal justice system in crisis. The new government must address the drivers of female offending, predominantly trauma, abuse and poverty, and recognise that specialist women's services, including women's centres, have a major part to play in that work. Now is the time to adopt a fundamentally and radically different approach, by centring the role of specialist women's organisations and women with lived experience alongside academics and statutory agencies and creating a Women's Justice Board.*

*"This model has been fundamental in driving change in the youth justice system, which was in a similar space to women's criminal justice – locked in a cycle that no-one seemed able to break until the right people and organisations were brought together to steer a different path."*

The Women's Justice Board would have responsibility for coordinating a cross-government focus on women and girls in or at risk of entering the criminal justice system. Centring these women and girls in all policies and approaches could achieve a drastic reduction in the number of women in prison, address reoffending and high rates of remand and recall, and prevent the criminalisation of women and girls. Central to this approach is sustainable investment in women's centres and specialist community-based support services to enable them to work in collaboration with well-functioning statutory services.

Despite widespread recognition and an evidence base demonstrating the value of women's centres and holistic women's services, these organisations have been consistently underfunded. This has led to inadequate, inequitable, and precarious levels of provision and a significant risk of women's specialist services being suspended or closed.

Ayers added:

*"Any plans for women's justice will only be successful with women's justice organisations at their heart, but without urgent, significant and long-term investment, there is a danger that many of these organisations may not survive. As the new government starts to address the crisis besieging our prison system, by introducing emergency measures like the early release scheme - to alleviate pressure on prison places - and the Probation Reset - to reduce demands on Probation - women's centres and specialist organisations will be needed more*



*than ever before. But without additional ring-fenced funding, they will not be able to meet the demand for support and will face a cliff edge of funding. Women will be left without support, reoffending and recalls will increase, and well-meaning reforms will be doomed to fail.”*

As part of emergency measures to deal with the current crisis, the NWJC calls on the government to provide an immediate injection of funding for women's specialist services, including women's centres. This is crucial to ensuring these organisations can support those affected by the early release scheme and the Probation Reset. Subsequently, through its spending review and strategic approach, the government must continue to recognise the value that properly funded women's specialist services represent and commit to embedding accessible and sustainable funding structures as a priority.

For any queries, questions or for further information about the NWJC, please email [info@weareNWJC.org.uk](mailto:info@weareNWJC.org.uk)

### **About the NWJC**

The National Women's Justice Coalition is an alliance of 26 women's organisations from across England and Wales that share a collective mission to drive systemic change to reduce the stigmatisation of women and girls in contact with the criminal justice system and improve outcomes for them.