

Making a success of Women's Justice Board: Specialists from the women's sector urge the Government to draw on their expertise and centre the voices of experience.

The [National Women's Justice Coalition](#) (NWJC) and partners from across the voluntary sector have come together to share their vision for the new Women's Justice Board and to urge the Government not to overlook their expertise.

In an open letter published today (14/01/25), almost 50 voluntary and community-based organisations, including the 26 women's specialist organisations of the NWJC, outline their vision, recommendations and expectations of the new Women's Justice Board.

Shabana Mahmood, Secretary of State for Justice, has said that *"For women, prison isn't working"* and the Women's Justice Board will be tasked with developing a strategy to reduce the number of women entering prison and make better use of alternatives to custody, including community sentences.

Women's organisations can offer expertise and insight to support this gendered strategy and help seize the opportunity it presents to break the cycles of trauma and harm that perpetuate female offending, while acknowledging the injustices leading to the criminalisation of women and girls.

Signatories of the letter argue the Board must have diverse representation including seats at the table for those from minoritised groups and for women with relevant lived experience. These representatives, working alongside women's leaders from community, voluntary and governmental organisations, will be critical to achieving an expert, intersectional understanding of the needs of women and girls.

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

"Solutions to the prison capacity crisis can be found in community-based, holistic services that support women and girls before, or when they first have contact with the criminal justice system, as well as further down the line.

The Women's Justice Board has an opportunity to adopt a radically different approach to addressing system failings and improving outcomes for women and girls. To achieve this the board must centre and value the expertise and input of specialist women's and voluntary sector organisations at the highest possible level.

We urge the Government to listen closely and to respond proactively to these recommendations. With the support and involvement of voluntary and community sector organisations and women's specialist charities, the Women's Justice Board can succeed in its mission to divert more women away from custody and address the root causes of their offending."

ENDS



For any queries, questions or for further information about the NWJC, please email 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.