

Stronger Together

Four years of the
National Women's
Justice Coalition



Our collective impact

**National Women's
Justice Coalition**

wearenwjc.org.uk



This report aims to provide a clear, accessible, and credible account of what has changed as a result of our collective work, exploring what we did, why it mattered, and what we learned.

Introduction

We are the **NWJC**

In just four years, the National Women's Justice Coalition (NWJC) has grown from a small founding group of women's organisations into a **recognised authority on policy and good practice for women affected by the criminal justice system.**

The power and impact of collaboration and collective influencing

Collectively we have launched the UK's first Women's Services Map, established a National Voice & Advisory Panel of experts by experience, contributed to national justice policy reforms and strengthened the visibility and credibility of the Women's Centre Model. Our coalition has demonstrated the power and impact of collaboration and collective influencing and has succeeded in embedding infrastructure and mechanisms to strengthen the voice of the women's voluntary community sector.

This is our first impact and evaluation report. It aims to set out who we are, what we have done, where we have had impact, when we have made progress, why our role remains critical and how we will continue to drive systems-level change for women and girls in contact with the criminal justice system (CJS).

Insights and evidence in this report have been collated from:

- NWJC monitoring and evaluation data
- qualitative evidence gathered from testimonies and interviews with our Partners, funders, allies and women with lived experience of the CJS
- documentary evidence, citations and references from policy documents, publications, submissions, events and national media
- analytical data gathered from across our websites and social media platforms

An important note on causality...

While we strongly believe that we punch above our weight and have contributed to sector level impact, we recognise that systems change is rarely linear, and our influence sits within a wider ecosystem of activity. We therefore do not attribute direct cause and effect between individual NWJC actions and sector or system level outcomes.

This report provides a detailed overview of the work we have undertaken both internally and independently as a coalition, and externally in collaboration with colleagues and stakeholders across the women's and justice sectors. Our growth and progress have taken place during a period marked by significant social and political turbulence. Over the past four years, we have needed to navigated major changes in Government, the rise of far right rhetoric, the cost of living crisis, increasing demand for women's specialist services, acute funding pressures and uncertainty across the sector, and wider geopolitical and social instability that disproportionately affects women and girls. Operating in this environment is challenging and achieving meaningful systems level influence and impact is inherently ambitious.

This report evidences our progress against infrastructure and coalition building and driving wider systemic change using contribution rather than causal claims. These claims are supported using triangulated evidence, such as documentary sources, corroborating testimony, and the timing of events. But we have sought to avoid assertions of sole or direct causation where we cannot robustly demonstrate this.

Author

The report was written by Abbi Ayers, Director of Strategic Development for the National Women's Justice Coalition, with support from Sally Cupitt, an independent evaluation consultant.

Our Top Ten Achievements

1. We have established a national directory of women's specialist services. Launched in 2023, the Women's Services Map was the UK's first directory of women's centres, aimed at increasing women's access to gender specific, specialist services in their community. Featuring over 100 women's centres and categorising over 400 specialist women's services, it is also widely used by practitioners, commissioners and funders as a trusted directory of information.

2. We have collated a national evidence base to champion best practice. The NWJC Resource Library curates current, credible research findings, recommendations and policy frameworks to support and reinforce arguments for the value of women's centres and specialist services. Commissioners, policymakers and practitioners can find, cite and apply what works.

3. We have coordinated and amplified a representative sector voice. As a coalition of 26 women's organisations, we have convened to be stronger together, creating mechanisms to enable expert evidence and insights to inform key women's justice policy developments and asks. Our national reach and trusted network of Partners has elevated the quality and credibility of our submissions and helped to deepen dialogue with local, regional and national stakeholders.

4. We have influenced national policy developments. Through coordinated advocacy and the collective expertise of our Partners, we have contributed to key justice policy reforms. Our evidence-based submissions, consultation responses and strategic engagement with decision makers have helped shape national reviews, inform legislative debates and strengthen oversight and accountability across the justice system.

5. We have informed improvements to funding and commissioning practices. By publishing new data and evidence, and through targeted approaches and engagement with key Ministers, commissioners and funders, we have strengthened the case for sustainable funding for women's organisations and specialist services and helped to secure women's specific funding, grant extensions and improvements to re-commissioning practices that have led to tangible gains for small, specialist women's organisations.

6. We have centred anti-racist practice in our partnership working. Our anti-racism Statement of Commitment has aligned our approach to inclusive leadership and power sharing across the coalition. Collectively, we have taken critical first steps to respond to the priorities, feedback, and asks of our small, specialist, by/for led Partners. Through steering groups, support forums, training, action learning and funded participation routes, we have aimed to centre anti-oppressive and anti-racist practice in our collaborative work.

7. We have championed lived experience leadership. Our co-designed National Voice & Advisory Panel (NVAP) of women with lived experience of the CJS was launched in 2024 and expanded in 2025, to centre experts by experience in shaping national policy and service design. NVAP members are supported to contribute to NWJC consultation responses, public messaging and our evidenced-based arguments and asks of policymakers to shift assumptions, challenge prejudice and destigmatise women's criminal justice involvement.

8. We have established the NWJC as a trusted authority. Through hosting high-attendance events, attracting national media coverage, publishing new research, reports, peer reviewed articles and briefing papers, and securing representation on senior stakeholder advisory groups, APPGs and at national conferences, we have an established a recognised, respected role within a wider ecosystem. This has strengthened our capacity and momentum to drive national influencing efforts.

9. We have made a strong digital footprint. Engagement with our online content and messaging has increased year on year, driven by a rising use of NWJC resources including our website, Women's Services Map and Resource Library. Our social media following has expanded significantly, backlinks from more than 70 reputable organisations have strengthened our discoverability, and NWJC content consistently achieves high search visibility and sustained audience engagement.

10. We have secured almost half a million pounds in funding to support our work Thanks to the generous support of a core group of funders from the Corston Independent Funders Coalition, we have secured over £450,000¹ in grant funding to support the establishment and development of the coalition. We have also been awarded £60,000 in multi-year funding from HMPPS.



26

Partner organisations including 10 small, specialist, by/for led women's organisations

49,985

number of visitors to our websites so far

2000+

combined followers across our social media platforms

Awarded over

£500,000

in grant funding to date

Launched the UK's

1st

directory of services for women in contact with the criminal justice system featuring 111 women's centres and 420 specialist women's services



Published

25

new briefings, reports, peer reviewed articles and blogs to strengthen evidence demonstrating the value of women's organisations

Compiled

7

joint submissions in response to national policy calls for evidence



Contributed to

4

national justice policy developments



Established a National Voice & Advisory Panel (NVAP) of

11

experts by experience - NVAP members contributed to 4 external co-design projects in 2025

Written

12

direct or joint letters to Ministers and senior officials to highlight critical issues impacting women in contact with the CJS and the women's organisations that support them

¹£455,790 secured in grants from 2020 - 2025



The need for a National woman's Justice Coalition

Insights, outcomes and impact

Before 2021, women's centres were delivering high impact, specialist support locally, but the national landscape **lacked a unified feminist coalition dedicated to elevating this expertise into policy and commissioning spaces.**

Varied and insufficient understanding of the Women's Centre Model, under-investment in women's services, and deep rooted, systemic inequalities all limited the women's sector's capacity to secure high-level representation and influence in national decision making.

The National Women's Justice Coalition was established to address these challenges. By bringing together women's organisations from across England and Wales, all expert in delivering trauma-informed, women-centred casework support to women, the NWJC convened a stronger, coherent, national voice and mechanisms for ensuring that lived and learned experience could shape justice policy and practice to improve outcomes for women and girls.

Who is the NWJC

The NWJC is a national feminist coalition of women's organisations working with women and girls in contact with the criminal justice system, particularly those operating community-based women's centres and culturally responsive specialist services. We share a collective mission to drive systemic change to reduce the stigmatisation and criminalisation of women and girls in contact with the criminal justice system and improve outcomes for them.

The coalition was founded by a group of five women's organisations and first established with 17 Partners in 2021. Since then, NWJC membership has increased by 53% and today includes 26 partners², over a third of which are small, specialist, by/for led women's organisations. We also work alongside a wide network of 'Friends' and organisations that are recognised as women's and/or criminal justice specialists delivering high-quality services or policy, research and campaigning work.

We are distinctive in our values and approach: feminist, specialist, inclusive, relational and evidence driven. We have strategically remained small enough to be agile and collaborative, while also seeking to centre the under-represented voices of those with lived and learned experience and expertise. Our independence from government funding enhances our ability to interrogate and speak candidly, and our Partners can highlight issues and concerns they cannot otherwise raise publicly due to contractual constraints.



2021-2023 Building the coalition

In September 2021, five founding Partners (Women in Prison; Brighton Women's Centre; Anawim; Together Women; The Nelson Trust) brought together 17 specialist organisations to establish the NWJC, secured startup funding, and appointed a dedicated development lead. Amid national probation recommissioning and prison expansion debates, Partners co-ordinated weekly checkins, shared intelligence, and presented joint messages, laying the groundwork for later successes in commissioning and policy influence. The NWJC website launched in April 2023 and our secure Partner Portal (intranet) went live in May 2023, supporting infrastructure building and our membership group to share news, updates, documents, evidence, and messages freely across the coalition.

2023-2024 Developing our infrastructure and collective voice

Our Anti-Racism Steering Group was established to surface and explore the priorities of the NWJC's by/for and small specialist Partners and we launched the Women's Services Map directory website (Sept 2023), providing a one-stop resource to facilitate practical and timely referral routes for women and girls needing specialist support both in custody and the community.

We launched the NWJC Resource Library (April 2024) to ensure the most recent and relevant evidence was easily accessible from one place. We published briefing papers, blogs, articles and reports to consolidate the evidence base and strengthen arguments demonstrating the social and financial value of women's centres and specialist women's services as alternatives to custody.

Following a co-design project to scope the best approach to facilitating and supporting lived experience engagement and leadership (2022-23), we launched the National Voice & Advisory Panel (NVAP) (Jan 2024). NVAP members were supported through team building opportunities, training, reflective practice and engagement routes designed to facilitate their contribution to the coalition's internal and external work.

2025-2026 Consolidation and national influence

We coordinated collective recommendations, consultation submissions and joint letters in response to the critical issues impacting women organisations and women in contact with the CJS, including vetting processes, imposition guidelines, Probation Reset measures, Standard Determinate Sentences and recall. We also led calls in response to key policy developments including the establishment of the Women's Justice Board (2024), the Independent Sentencing Review (2025), and the Sentencing Bill (January 2026).

Our voice and views were amplified through third party publications in the Prison Service Journal and the British Journal of Community Justice. We secured national media coverage and accreditation through collaborative work with our allies including the Women's Budget Group and the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies. This helped to affirm the credibility of our research, data and insights.

Our digital footprint grew. Visitors to the NWJC website and users of the Women's Services Map rose year-on-year, backlinks from 70+ reputable websites boosted our digital authority and our social media following increased exponentially.

The National Voice & Advisory Panel expanded, increasing our capacity to embed and centre lived experience leadership and expertise.

We advanced power-sharing in practice and hosted a residential event (Nov 2025) for the NWJC's ten small, specialist partners and members of the NVAP. We provided engagement grants and a structured space to reflect on strategic influencing priorities and racial justice work and to consider how to better support capacity building across the coalition.

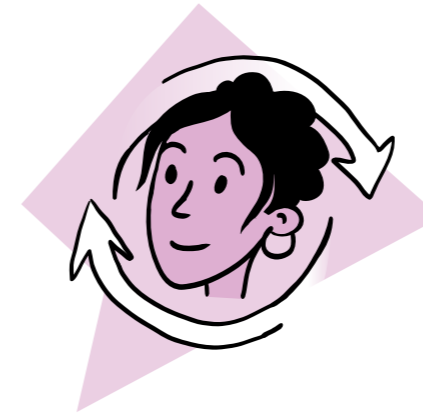
²As of March 2026

Our strategic objectives



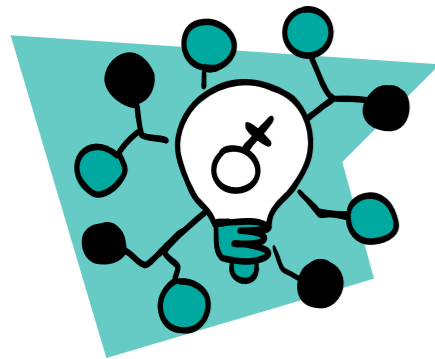
Strategic Objective 1

Secure sustainable funding for women's centres and specialist women's services for women in contact with the criminal justice system in every community.



Strategic Objective 4

Centre lived experience leadership and expertise to amplify the priorities and complex needs of women in contact with the criminal justice system.



Strategic Objective 2

Demonstrate the **value of high quality, trauma-informed, gender-specific, culturally responsive specialist services** in improving outcomes for women.



Strategic Objective 5

Influence and inform national policy to **reduce the number of women in prison** and make better use of community sentences.



Strategic Objective 3

Model and advocate for inclusive, anti-racism approaches that address individual, organisational and structural inequalities.

The Goldsmiths' Company Charity

Read on to see our impact against these objectives →



Our impact against strategic

Objective 1

Secure sustainable funding for women's centres and specialist women's services for women in contact with the criminal justice system in every community.



Why this matters

Our Partners and the wider women's sector has faced historical underinvestment, exacerbated by short-term funding cycles and competitive commissioning and tendering processes based on efficiency and economies of scale that continually disadvantage and marginalise women's specialist organisations, particularly small, specialist, by/for led organisations.

Against this backdrop, the NWJC has an essential role to play in:

- Illustrating the true funding landscape including the hidden pressures facing small, specialist by/for led women's organisations
- Strengthening the evidence base for investment in trauma informed, gender specific support
- Coordinating collective pressure on government, commissioners and funders to extend grants, adjust processes, and redesign procurement processes to reduce inequities
- Amplifying the expertise, visibility and legitimacy of women's organisations to support sustainable funding arguments

What we have done

- Coordinated sector intelligence and evidence by consolidating and publishing up to date funding data, making the financial case for women's centres and alternatives to custody.
- Engaged decision makers early and often by writing to Ministers and officials to highlight funding cliff edges and the need for grant extensions and flexible commissioning timelines. We have participated in recommissioning advisory forums to feed sector-wide expertise directly into specifications and processes.
- Amplified the issue publicly by securing national media coverage to present the sector's funding gap using coalition data and testimonies.

Early outcomes

Recognised expertise and formal routes

- NWJC has been invited to take part in HMPPS recommissioning forums, establishing a structured channel through which we can contribute expertise, evidence and feedback on design, procurement and mobilisation.

Providing evidence for decision makers

- Our funding briefings have informed strategic planning and been positively received by the Women's Justice Board and senior officials. We have made the sustainability of the women's sector more visible and begun to influence national level planning and decision making.

"NWJC has been very good at promoting the women's centre model and why women's centres are an effective way of engaging and supporting women caught up in the CJS. I think they're very effective at articulating how that model works and why it works."

- NWJC Friend

Impact

Funding continuity secured

Multi-month extensions to core grants have reduced immediate cliff edge risks. Our Partners and external stakeholders have attributed this, in part, to the NWJC's evidence-led lobbying and coordinated messaging.

Commissioning practice improved

Our Partners report tangible concessions and clarifications from commissioners that have made applications more workable for specialist providers.

More money is reaching specialist women's organisations

Compared with earlier cycles, a greater share of probation contracts for women's services are now held by women's specialist providers, helping to increase the quality and expertise of provision for women in contact with the CJS.

Smaller organisations are accessing government funding

Consortium approaches have enabled smaller providers to participate in competitive tendering processes, protecting local specialisms and diversity in delivery.

"You could put a monetary value on what the NWJC has helped retain in the sector through extensions and improved funding decisions... the return on the investment is huge."

- NWJC Partner

"Funding uncertainty causes immense pressure... the coalition helps us navigate it."

- NWJC Partner

"NWJC made very strong arguments... that's what happened... in the end we had services for women commissioned separately"

- NWJC Friend

Case study

Turning evidence of the funding gap into influence

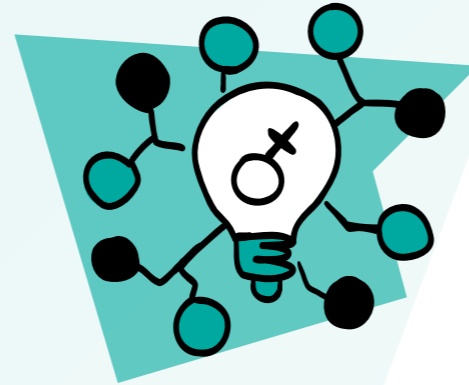
In May 2025, the NWJC and the Women's Budget Group published *The Women's Centre Model – the Financial Case for Alternatives to Prison*, collating coalition data that showed 77% of NWJC organisations lacked the funding they needed to deliver the Women's Centre Model in 2025/26. We combined this data with clear recommendations for achieving sustainable investment into the women's sector, and progressing reforms to commissioning processes. This report generated national media coverage, broadening accountability and recognition of the inherent problems besieging the women's sector. Subsequent funding extensions to government contracts held by women's organisations have been announced, reducing the immediate risk to women's services.



Our impact against strategic

Objective 2

Demonstrate the value of **high quality, trauma-informed, gender-specific, culturally responsive specialist services** in improving outcomes for women.



Why this matters

Specialist women's services remain essential and irreplaceable, yet they continue to be misunderstood and undervalued within commissioning and policy environments. The Women's Centre Model, with its relational, holistic, trauma informed support and its proven role in providing community based alternatives to custody, is increasingly strained by rising demand, greater prevalence of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), deepening poverty, mental health pressures and housing shortages. These challenges are compounded by the growth of generic provision that lacks specialist expertise, and by a wider trend toward degendered commissioning that overlooks women's distinct needs and rights. Together, these pressures risk poorer outcomes for women and undermine the women's specialist sector, reinforcing the urgent need to clearly demonstrate and protect the value of high quality, gender specific, culturally responsive services.

What we have done

We have focused on building practical, accessible infrastructure to make women's specialist support services more visible, comprehensible, and easier to engage with.

- Our Women's Services Map (launched 2023) provides the first national, self updating directory of women's centres and specialist services. The Map enables women, practitioners and commissioners to locate genuine, trauma informed support across England and Wales.
- Our NWJC Resource Library provides an authoritative, up to date catalogue of resources for professionals, consolidating the evidence base for the Women's Centre Model, partnership working, anti-oppressive and inclusive practice and lived experience leadership.
- Through the publication of NWJC briefing papers, co-produced with our Partners and members of the NVAP, we have supported organisations to articulate their value clearly and consistently.

Early outcomes

Improved visibility, credibility and understanding of the women's sector

→ Our tools and platforms are evidencing and reinforcing arguments as to the value of women's organisations.

Sustained engagement through NWJC publications and resource

→ Many of the publications in our online Resource Library attract reading time behaviour rather than rapid clicks, reflecting an appetite for credible evidence. Our publications, briefings and evidence summaries have also driven spikes in website traffic and strengthened search visibility.

Increasing authority and discoverability

→ NWJC content has attained strong search visibility (e.g 1,100+ impressions in a single day), with 72 organisations linking to it, including Russell Group universities and sector leaders, amplifying our evidence and elevating our credibility.

Impact

- Our work has contributed to improvements in how commissioners, funders and practitioners understand the Women's Centre Model, with Partners seeing a shift from needing to justify their approach to being met with a clearer, shared understanding of what it is they offer.
- By consolidating evidence and publishing new data to reinforce our asks, we have strengthened the women's sector's ability to speak consistently about its role and impact.



"We don't have to explain the model every time... funders now have an immediate route to understand it."

- NWJC Partner

"Just used your wonderful map to find a women's centre in Leeds for a woman leaving prison... it's so straightforward to use. A fantastic resource for prisons and other services!"

- Kyra Women's Project

"We used the Map to identify appropriate local services... and enabled the woman to move out of area while maintaining support."

- Together Women Project

"Their Women's Services Map ... was very useful for me. Not only have I used it in some of my own internal analyses around future expansion and funding programmes, I inserted a link and reference to the map into an important report advising the government on women's justice issues; helping ensure they were clear what we mean by 'women's centres'"

- NWJC Funder

"The Map is one of the best examples I've seen and the value of it is that it is self-updating.... I know the level of information was really good when it was first created. There was quite a lot of detail, so I think that's brilliant."

- NWJC Friend

Case study

Putting women's services on the map

The Women's Services Map was created to address a long standing practical barrier: how to easily locate and refer women and girls in contact with the criminal justice system into specialist, gender responsive support.

Designed with a self updating architecture to ensure accuracy and credibility, it has rapidly become a trusted tool for women, their families, caseworkers, practitioners, prison staff and other professionals. Sector allies have welcomed its ability to clearly illustrate the breadth and depth of specialist provision, while funders have used it to brief ministers and senior officials. Practitioners also report making faster and more confident referrals as a result of having a clear national picture of services.

The Map has seen significant and sustained uptake, with 13,232 unique users in its first year (2023-24) and 19,137 the following year - an increase of 43 percent - alongside strong growth in returning visitors. Its practical value has been recognised nationally, including by funders who have incorporated it into ministerial briefings. It is now viewed as credible national infrastructure that helps commissioners distinguish authentic specialist provision. The NWJC has secured multi year funding for the Map from HMPPS (2025-30), further signalling recognition of its strategic importance and long term contribution to strengthening support pathways for women.



Objective 3

Model and advocate for inclusive, anti-racism approaches that address individual, organisational and structural inequalities.



Why this matters

Structural racism shapes every part of women's experiences of the criminal justice system. Black, Asian and minoritised women face harsher criminalisation, greater surveillance, and disproportionate barriers to support. But the by/for led specialist organisations best placed to meet their needs face chronic underfunding, under representation in national policy spaces, and marginalisation and exclusion from competitive commissioning models.

What we have done

We have worked to lay the foundations for anti-racist practice across the coalition by developing our Statement of Commitment to Anti-Racism and delivering coalition wide anti-racism and inclusive leadership training. Through our expansion strategy, we have committed to prioritising and protecting space for small, specialist by/for led Partners to increase racial and cultural diversity across the coalition. We have delivered targeted events for these organisations to inform our strategic direction and deepen our collective understanding of the structural inequalities and barriers they face. This engagement with our small, specialist by/for led Partners has generated clear proposals for change that will inform our future governance strategy.

We recognise that meaningful progress requires both internal change within the coalition and external advocacy to shift inequitable structures. Collectively, NWJC Partners have committed to modelling inclusive, anti-oppressive, anti-racist approaches through our coalition building, and by championing these values externally to ensure equitable systems, partnerships and leadership.

Early outcomes

Partners report a greater shared understanding of anti-racist practice

→ We have facilitated safe spaces to surface issues around representation, power and equity and develop clearer articulation of the challenges facing minoritised women's organisations.

Our strategic direction has been shaped by collective learning

→ We recognise that to progress together, the coalition must remain accountable and accessible to all Partners and evolve and grow in ways that truly embed equity and support power-sharing.

Impact

- Our inclusive approach has contributed to increased representation of by/for specialist women's organisations within national influencing spaces.
- Our Partners report greater openness to difficult conversations about power, whiteness and structural inequality and collectively and we have begun to shift from reactive, ad hoc approaches toward a more strategic anti-racist framework, grounded in accountability and demonstrable change.

"They've worked really hard to look at organisations that work specifically with Black and racially minoritised women and those much smaller organisations who are often less well funded and who struggle to get their voices heard. Seeking to ensure that those partners who are smaller, who maybe don't always have a voice at the table, who are marginalised and where racism in particular play the part, I think NWJC are very good at working to ensure that they try and address that."

- NWJC Friend

"The coalition protects those smaller partners. Sometimes I've described the coalition as a big sister to all these little sisters because we can be the battering ram, or shield, and we can put our head above the parapet so they don't have to, and they can then avoid the risk of losing funding or reputational damage"

- NWJC Director of Strategic Development

"I appreciated having the space to both listen and talk openly. It's not often that we get the chance to share our challenges and frustrations in such a supportive environment. These conversations were not only cathartic but also instrumental in identifying common obstacles and brainstorming potential solutions together."

- NWJC Partner

Case study

Strengthening anti-racist leadership through targeted engagement

A 2025 residential event for our ten small, specialist Partners brought together organisational leads and members of our National Voice & Advisory Panel (NVAP) to examine inequity, power dynamics and barriers to meaningful participation. Together, participants reviewed the NWJC's governance framework and strategic direction through an anti-racist lens, identifying disparities, misaligned objectives and the need for structural and operational reform at coalition level.

A shared recognition emerged that the NWJC must "get our house in order" internally to be able to challenge systemic racism externally.

The event generated a clear agenda for future collective action, including proposals to introduce an Equity Pledge, revise governance mechanisms, define by/for leadership within the coalition, and create microgrants to support equitable participation.



Our impact against strategic

Objective 4

Centre lived experience leadership and expertise to amplify the priorities and complex needs of women in contact with the criminal justice system.



Why this matters

Women with lived experience of the CJS are too often spoken about rather than listened to. They hold critical insight into how services, systems and decisions affect real lives. Yet their voices have historically been marginalised or used only as testimony, rather than recognised as professional expertise.

Centring lived experience requires trauma-informed approaches, ongoing support and pathways into leadership. We have committed from the outset to shift power and embed lived experience expertise at the heart of our coalition to influence and shape national policy, commissioning and service design.

What we have done

In early 2024, we laid the foundations for national lived experience leadership but establishing a National Voice & Advisory Panel (NVAP). The NVAP is comprised of 11 skilled, strategic professional women with lived experience of the criminal justice system and combines structured training, reflective practice, and facilitated engagement opportunities for its members.

Although still in its infancy, the NVAP's collective work has begun shifting sector narratives about lived experience, with NVAP members having contributed to our publications, blogs, external forums and influencing efforts.

Early outcomes

NVAP involvement has contributed to increases in women's confidence

→ By conducting qualitative interviews and feedback surveys with women, we have chartered significant increases in women's self worth and professional identity through their NVAP involvement.

NVAP expertise is highly valued

→ External partners describe NVAP input as professional, well prepared and insight rich, and funders have said they value the NWJC's pragmatic approach to prioritising lived experience participation and engagement.

Impact

- The NVAP is helping to increase the visibility and legitimacy of lived experience voices by enabling women to influence and contribute to national strategies, research and service design.
- The NVAP has begun to reframe sector narratives about what we mean by lived experience expertise, challenging notions of simply valuing testimony, to centring lived experience as professional expertise.

"My self-worth was really low... but here I am on the Board. It's really brought my confidence up."

- NVAP member

"Being involved in the NVAP has brought nothing but joy... it's empowering."

- NVAP member

"Having (NVAP member's) expertise, experience, and insight in the room was invaluable. (NVAP member) joined a workshop with leaders and practitioners, all about designing a better support model for people with experience of care and custody in the women's estate. They contributed to a rich discussion, offering unique perspectives and insights that grounded the discussion in lived experience."

- Innovation Consultant, Connections Project, Sept 2025

"These women's voices have added weight, colour and character to the work. Their opinions have in some cases contradicted previously held beliefs about the priorities for ... where organisations haven't involved a lived experience voice ... this has made the findings and recommendations much more powerful."

- Health & justice Research Project, Sept 2025

"[NVAP participants] were completely professional, well prepared, focused and so insightful. Confirmed a lot of our thinking but also bought great challenge in some areas."

- Her Insights Collective



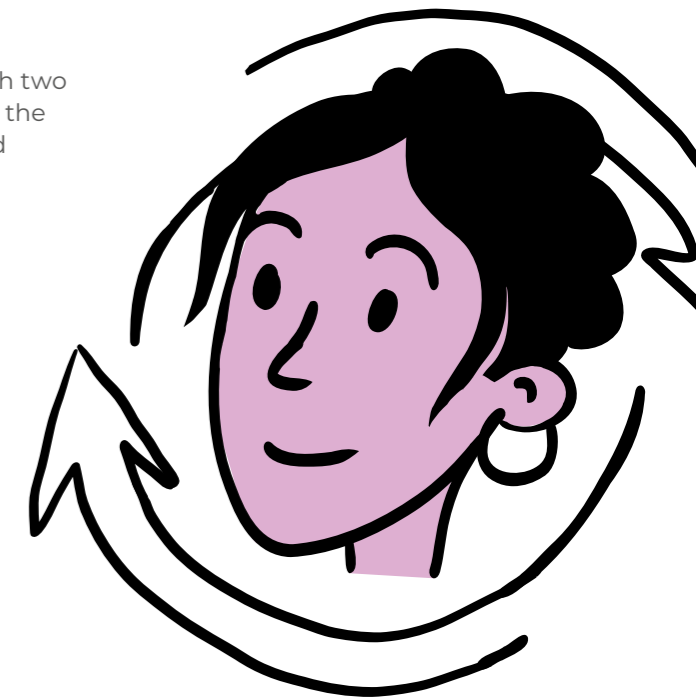
Case study

From participation to influence

In 2023, we undertook a six-month long consultancy project with two lived experience consultants to inform our approach to centring the expertise, diversity and leadership potential of women with lived experience in the coalition's work.

Using a trauma-informed and participatory methodology, we carried out structured discussions, deep dive reflections, and collaborative workshops to identify what women needed to participate safely, confidently and meaningfully in national strategic work. This project highlighted critical considerations for the NWJC, from safeguarding, confidentiality and tailored wellbeing support to meeting women's practical needs such as remuneration, accessibility, logistics and time frames, it enabled us to develop a detailed set of recommendations for supporting strategic engagement and participation work for lived experience experts.

Co-designing the framework for the National Voice & Advisory Panel directly with women themselves strengthened our ability to embed lived experience expertise at the heart of our decision making from the beginning. Learnings from this project directly informed how we went on to recruit and onboard the first founding members of the NVAP in early 2024, and support their engagement and participation thereafter.



National Voice and Advisory Panel

Our impact against strategic

Objective 5

Influence and inform national policy to **reduce the number of women in prison** and make better use of community sentences.



Why this matters

National justice policy change is essential to reduce the number of women in prison and shift investment and attention towards community based, trauma-informed alternatives. To achieve this, the women's sector needs a coordinated, feminist voice capable of presenting credible evidence and unified recommendations. The NWJC seeks to fulfil this role.

What we have done

Through media coverage, policy briefings and representation at high profile events, we have brought coherence and urgency to national discussions about women's justice. Collectively we have coordinated high quality evidence-based submissions and consultation responses, published joint letters and open statements, and unified public messaging to maximise impact and effect systems change. We have also strengthened cross sector collaboration by aligning our policy asks and campaigning efforts with the work of our friends and allies.

Collectively, we have engaged directly with ministers, civil servants and senior officials to represent the women's sector's interests and make evidence-based, expert recommendations to inform policy reforms and development.

Early outcomes

Our expertise and national reach is being recognised

→ This is evident through the direct acknowledgement and engagement we have received from ministers and the increasing levels of expert insight we are being asked to provide by stakeholders working for the Ministry of Justice, HMPPS, the Women's Justice Board and leading funders including the Corston Independent Funders Coalition.

Impact

NWJC's collective influence has contributed to major policy shifts, including:

- Establishment of the Women's Justice Board (2024) – following on from our direct calls and recommendation, the government announced the formation of the Women's Justice Board (WJB) (Sept 2024) and four NWJC partner representatives were appointed to the Women's Justice Board's Partnership Delivery Group.
- Changes to sentencing policy through the Independent Sentencing Review (2025) - the Independent Sentencing Review published its final report directly citing NWJC evidence.
- Release of Gaie Delap (2025) through coalition advocacy
- Clause 35 (publication of names/photos in relation to unpaid work) was removed from the Sentencing Bill (2026) following our collective lobbying work with 20+ charities and experts.

"The coalition acts as a policy backstop."

- NWJC Partner

"There's no ignoring our presence in this space anymore."

- NWJC Partner

"Knowing that a response is going to happen [through the NWJC] means we can all feed in. All our voices included."

- NWJC Partner

"That was a classic example of coalition impact, pulling together and doing a joint submission. They did listen and included so many things that we suggested. It's now going to become law!"

- NWJC Partner

Case study

Shaping the sentencing agenda: from coalition evidence to national reform

To influence the Independent Sentencing Review (ISR), we coordinated a detailed submission in response to the Review Panel's call for evidence. This submission collated Partner case studies, current research and lived experience insights. The ISR Final Report and Proposals for Reform directly cited NWJC evidence and acknowledged the valuable and central role the voluntary sector has to play in supporting reforms, not least women's organisations delivering the Women's Centre Model.



What we have learnt so far

...about being a coalition

Relational strength is our power. We have demonstrated that a relatively small, specialist coalition can achieve a disproportionate national impact. Our Partners consistently cite the value of connection, solidarity and shared intelligence that comes from NWJC membership, particularly in a context where many women's organisations experience operational isolation.

Insights provided by our small, specialist, by/for led Partners have reinforced our collective commitment to being inclusive, focused and accountable, ensuring participation routes remain accessible, feedback mechanisms are embedded, and participation for all Partners is meaningful.

"We are collaborative feminist leaders... doing the work for ourselves rather than fitting into prescribed structures."

"The breadth and depth of expertise in the group, combined with the scale of ambition, is particularly valuable."

"We've created a space where we can say challenging things and receive generous, helpful responses."

"The coalition's solidarity feeds back into the resilience of our organisations."

"It represents strength in numbers - we have more collective bargaining power."

- NWJC Partners

"They've taken a very cautious approach... a forensic approach... aware of being small and agile while having deep relationships."

- NWJC Friend

...about influencing funding and commissioning

Our strategic value lies in creating conditions for specialist services to be understood, valued and funded. Our collective advocacy has helped to strengthen the sector's influence over national funders and commissioners. In interviews, our Partners have emphasised their beliefs that the coalition's power lies in collective legitimacy.

Our infrastructure has enabled us to pool intelligence nationally, drawing on the experiences and insights of women's organisations operating in multiple regions. These learnings underscore the importance of the NWJC's role in highlighting systemic barriers and inequities, collating evidence, and advocating for the reforms needed to plug the funding gaps women's organisations are faced with when delivering their highly specialist work.

"The letters that we've all signed... put enough pressure on the MoJ to unlock processes we would never have been able to do on our own."

"Real, significant concessions have been achieved so we can deliver without compromising."

"It saves each of us the capacity and time spent on individual influencing."

- NWJC Partners

...about lived experience participation

Convening the National Voice & Advisory Panel has taught us that centring lived experience requires more than just creating a platform - it also necessitates infrastructure, support and clarity.

NVAP members have identified the need for a narrative shift when setting expectations and boundaries for supporting lived experience participation. This work cannot be treated as a tokenistic simply to add weight and credibility to a project or service. We must also move away from the notion of centring women simply because they have lived experience and recognise and value their professional competencies and leadership skills in equal or greater measure.

"We're professionals with lived experience, rather than lived experience professionals."

"All our voices are being heard."

"The girls on the panel really inspire me... I'm proud of every single one of us."

- NVAP members

...about equity and anti-racism

Our anti-racism journey to date has highlighted both collective progress and structural gaps. Partners have valued our initial commitments as well as the cross-coalition training, action learning sets and facilitated support, but together we have learned that transformative anti-racist approaches require more than just practice sharing.

To progress and grow, we must now re-evaluate participation routes and power dynamics within the coalition to develop more specific, accountable anti-racism objectives, underpinned by a stronger governance structure, improved representation and clear accountability measures.

By protecting space for small, specialist by/for led Partners, we have strengthened representative voices and expertise within the coalition. But to fully centre their organisational involvement, we will need to re-evaluate our approach in alignment with Partner expectations and commitments, and re-design our models of power sharing if we wish to drive meaningful progress against this strategic objective.

...about influencing government

We have demonstrated that consistency works and relationships matter. By consolidating evidence, publishing new data, building trust and credibility with senior stakeholders, and unifying our messages and key asks, we have achieved traction and exercised strategic pragmatism in our first four years of activities, maintaining a solutions-focused approach in our influencing work.

"The patterns we want to challenge are existing within us."

- NWJC Partner

"We need clearer objectives across structure, decision making, involvement and service delivery."

- NWJC Partner



Our future

The next phase of our work must be shaped by these learnings and respond directly to **what our Partners, funders, Friends and NVAP members have told us.**

Their insights point to the unique and specific role the NWJC has to play in the women's sector to:

Deepen our evidence infrastructure by:

- Developing and expanding the Women's Services Map, improving prison listings and identifying geographic gaps in provision.
- Enhancing our Resource Library by adding thematic tags, evidence summaries and practice guidance.
- Developing real time intelligence pathways between Partners and policymakers to highlight emerging issues such as racial disproportionality, VAWG trends and service demand pressures.

These actions will strengthen our ability to demonstrate the unique value of women's specialist services amid increasing system pressure.

Grow in a values driven and deliberate way by:

- Expanding our membership group carefully, prioritising representation from women's specialist and by/for led organisations.
- Maintaining the strengths of being small, relational and specialist collective.
- Investing in coalition capacity to balance our strategic ambition with sustainability and deliverability.

This approach will protect our agility while ensuring that no Partner feels lost, left behind or unable to engage due to capacity constraints.

Campaign for long-term sustainable funding by:

- Continuing to build the national case for multi-year, ring fenced investment in women's centres and women's specialist services.
- Influencing commissioning and recommissioning processes to better respond to and support women's specialist services to participate and be resourced.
- Continuing to publish evidence to demonstrate the social and economic value that women's organisations contribute to society.

These priorities respond directly to our Partners' experiences of funding and commissioning processes.



Strengthen national understanding of specialist women's services by:

- Affirming the NWJC as a leading national 'go-to' group for expertise on policy and good practice for women affected by the criminal justice system.
- Producing clear, accessible evidence and data demonstrating the value of the Women's Centre Model and how this works.
- Developing high quality content on the Women's Services Map and NWJC Resource Library to demonstrate the breadth and specialisms of women's organisations and highlight gaps and inequities in national provision.
- Publishing work to inform commissioners, funders and policymakers on the emerging needs of women and girls in contact with the CJS.

This work will help to safeguard the integrity of specialist women's services at a time when generic providers and generic provision models risk failing to meet women's needs.

Expand and embed lived experience leadership by:

- Increasing the capacity and visibility of the National Voice & Advisory Panel, developing clearer pathways into national influencing.
- Resourcing NVAP members through training, leadership development and paid consultancy roles.
- Promoting NVAP members publicly as qualified experts.
- Centring NVAP expertise in all areas of our strategic work to ensure lived experience voices shape and drive our collective mission.

These steps will respond directly to our Partners' commitments to centre and embed lived experience expertise across all aspects of the coalition's work.

Strengthen anti-racism and equity by:

- Formalising equity-centred joint working practices, decision-making, participation standards and accountability measures as part of a comprehensive NWJC governance audit and review.
- Developing a new participation and engagement strategy that addresses power dynamics, whiteness and structural inequities within the coalition.
- Prioritising resourcing for small, specialist, by/for led Partners to support them to feed into and shape our national influencing efforts.

The NWJC must model the equity it seeks to influence to be able to challenge the systemic racism that exists across the women's and criminal justice sectors.

Deepen parliamentary and Government engagement by:

- Strengthening local, regional and national awareness and understanding among MPs, ministers, commissioners, policymakers and senior stakeholders of the Women's Centre Model.
- Developing pragmatic and strategic, solutions-focused asks based on constructive solutions and robust evidence.
- Securing structured, regular routes to feed evidence into criminal justice policy.
- Aligning influencing work with women's and human rights issues.

To wield influence in a rapidly shifting political landscape that includes the rise of far-right narratives, degendered policy approaches and heightened scrutiny of women's services, we must build on our existing credibility, expand our trusted relationships and coordinate engagement to achieve national impact.

Conclusion

Over the past four years, the NWJC has shown how it is possible for specialist women's organisations and lived experience experts to unite behind a shared mission and establish a credible national voice capable of shaping policy, influencing commissioning, and protecting the integrity of specialist women's services.

The story of the NWJC is one of collective strength: of specialist organisations coming together in solidarity, sharing knowledge, amplifying lived experience expertise and holding firm to a feminist vision for justice.

As we step into the next phase of our work, we recognise how the landscape is shifting rapidly, and how deep systemic inequalities persist. So, our strategic focus remains on deepening our evidence infrastructure, embedding equity and lived experience leadership, and securing the sustainable investment required to meet the complex needs of women and girls in contact with the criminal justice system and improve outcomes for them.

Based on the strength of our platform and the credibility we have established in our first four years of activities, the NWJC will continue to seek to progress long-term, meaningful systems change.

"We are a group of amazing women... this is how social justice happens, in the finest feminist tradition of organising."

- NWJC Partner



Appendices

Data sets

Direct letters to Ministers and Senior Officials:

1. Apr 2023 - Letter to Secretary of State for Justice Alex Chalk (Re: welcoming publication of FOS Delivery Plan and introducing NWJC)
2. May 2024 - Letter to Chris Taylor, SRO for Electronic Monitoring & CRS Recommissioning (MoJ/HMPPS) (Re: concerns regarding delay in implementation of men and women's un-sentenced changes)
3. Aug 2024 - Letter to Anna Lacey (Deputy Director, MoJ Women's Policy) (Re: pushing for MoJ funding announcement)
4. Aug 2024 - Letter to Lord Chancellor Shabana Mahmood (Re: concerns in relation to MoJ funding)
5. Aug 2024 - Letter to James Timpson, Minister for Prisons & Probation (Re: concerns in relation to MoJ funding)
6. Aug 2024 - Letter to Laurence Fiddler, MoJ Senior Policy Lead (Re: concerns in relation to MoJ funding)
7. Jan 2025 - Published open letter to Government (co-signed by 22 organisations) (Re: Women's Justice Board strategy)
8. Feb 2025 - Letter to Lord Chancellor Shabana Mahmood (Re: concerns in lack of VCS representation on WJB)
9. Aug 2025 - Letter to James Timpson, Minister for Prisons & Probation (Re: funding cliff edge)

Co-signed letters to Ministers and Senior Officials:

1. June 2024 - Co-signed open letter to Secretary of State for Women & Girls (crossgovernment) Part of Agenda Alliance #CallingSOS campaign.
2. Jan 2025 - Co-signed letter to Justice Secretary calling for recall failures to be addressed (specifically citing Gaie Delap case)
3. Oct 2025 - Cosigned open letter to Ministers to withdraw Clause 35 from Sentencing Bill

Evidence submissions

1. July 2023 - Joint briefing paper (with Clinks, Criminal Justice Alliance and Revolving Doors) evidencing impact and issues associated with delayed vetting and security clearances
2. July 2023 - Joint submission to HMPPS on vetting delays
3. Feb 2024 - Joint submission to Sentencing Council (Re: Imposition of community and custodial sentences guideline consultation)

4. June 2024 - Joint submission to Anna Lacey & Richard Hutchinson, HMPPS women's policy leads (Re: concerns and issues identified in relation to Probation Reset and its implications for women)
5. Jan 2025 - Joint submission to Independent Sentencing Review in response to calls for evidence
6. April 2025 - Written recommendations to APPG on Women Affected by the CJS on how to address women's self-harm and mental health risks in prison
7. Dec 2025 - Written recommendations to inform the recall clause in the Sentencing Bill and the non-legislative work being done on recall (RR3)

Original statements and publications:

1. Public Statement: In response to Government plans to build 500 new women's prison places (2021)
2. Public Statement: Outlining Top 3 Asks of next UK Government (July 2024)
3. Public Statement: In response to the new Sentencing Council guidelines (March 2025)
4. Public Statement: NWJC Key Asks of the next UK Government (Jun/Jul 2024)

5. Briefing papers (Apr 2024):

- A. Understanding how women's centres work
 - B. Why women's centres and specialist services need sustainable funding
 - C. Understanding the disadvantages and inequalities experienced by women in contact with the CJS
 - D. Understanding the WSA and value of partnership working
6. Briefing paper (co-published with Women's Budget Group): The Women's Centre Model – The Financial Case for Alternatives to Prison (May 2025)
 7. Report: Women's Services Map – Year 1 in Review (Sept 2024)
 8. Report: Co-Designing the NWJC Panel – Key Recommendations (Nov 2022–Mar 2023)
 9. Report: Breaking out of the Justice Loop with CCJS (Mar 2025)
 10. Report: Women's Services Map – Year 2 in Review (Jan 2026)
 11. Guidance: How to vote in the UK General Election (May 2024)
 12. Press release: NWJC calls for a Women's Justice Board (Jun/Jul 2024)

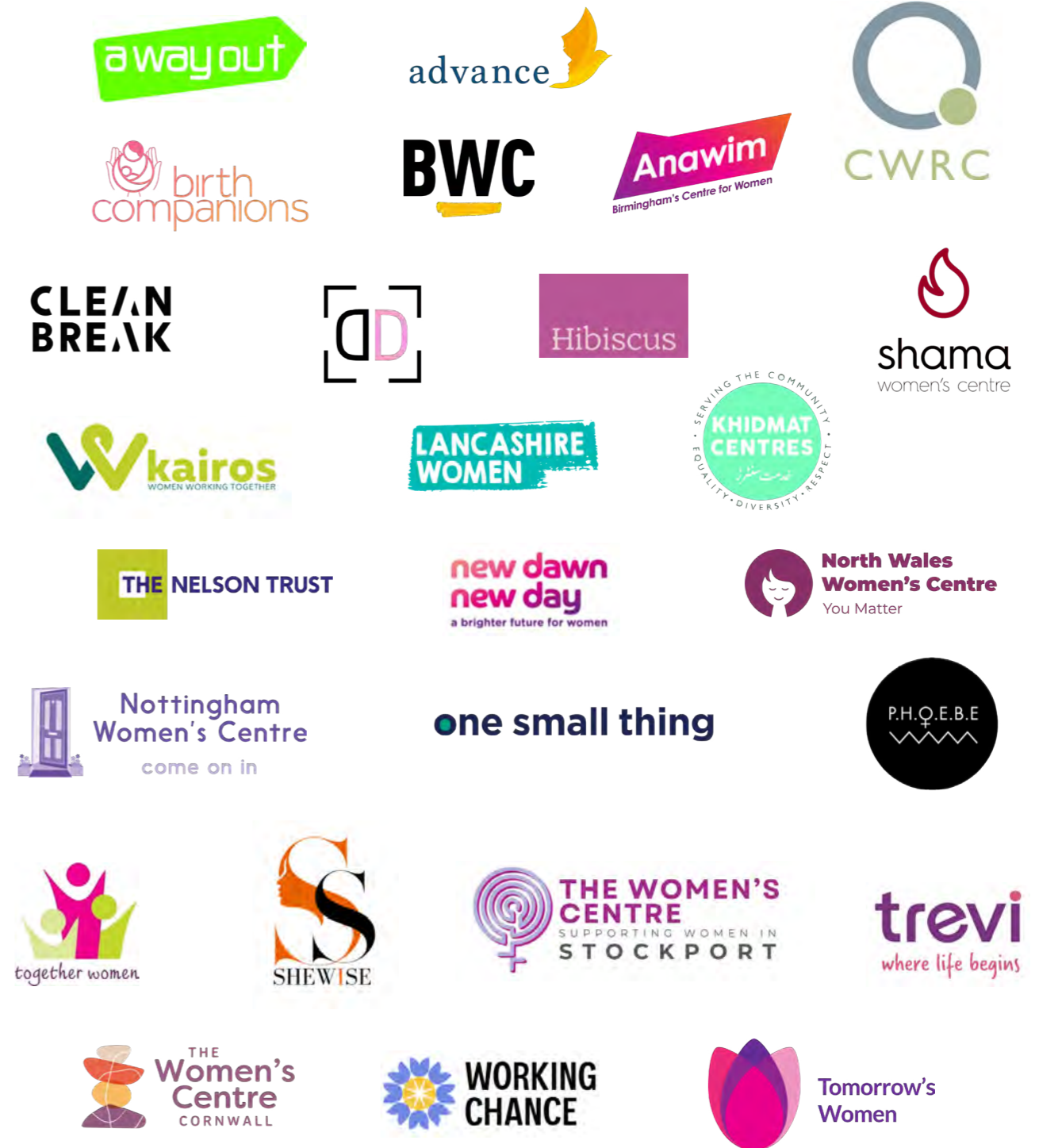
13. Publication: [Prison Services Journal](#) – The Value of Women's Centres (March 2025)
14. Publication: British Journal of Community Justice - [How we can realise the ambition of the Independent Sentencing Review by cementing the firm foundations needed to deliver transformative justice for women](#)
15. Blog: [Five things I've learned about how we build coalitions](#)
16. Blog: [Why women's centres work](#)
17. Blog: [Amplifying our voice: why the NWJC has developed briefing papers](#)
18. Blog: [Power of the collective - my reflections on the NWJC's work](#)
19. Blog: [The Women's Services Map - a transformative tool for supporting women](#)
20. Blog: [A critical moment for women in the criminal justice system](#)
21. Blog: [Why the Women's Justice Board needs teeth!](#)
22. Blog: [The Women's Justice Board: an opportunity to pioneer a new era of lived experience leadership?](#)
23. Blog: [Our voices are the key to change](#)
24. Blog: [Time to care - why women deserve more than this](#)
25. Blog: [How collaborative funding is strengthening women's centres](#)

List of Friends

- | | |
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| <p>Agenda Alliance
www.agendaalliance.org</p> <p>Appeal www.appeal.org.uk</p> <p>Better Justice Partnership
www.nacro.org.uk/better-justice-partnership</p> <p>Centre for Crime and Justice Studies
www.crimeandjustice.org.uk</p> <p>Centre for Justice Innovation
www.justiceinnovation.org</p> <p>Centre for Women's Justice
www.centreforwomensjustice.org.uk</p> <p>Changing Lives www.changing-lives.org.uk</p> <p>Clinks www.clinks.org</p> <p>Greater Manchester Women's Support Alliance (GMWSA)
www.gmwsa.wordpress.com</p> <p>Himaya Haven CIC
www.himayahaven.co.uk</p> <p>Pact (Prison Advice & Care Trust)
www.prisonadvice.org.uk</p> <p>Parents And Children Together (PACT) / Alana House
www.pactcharity.org/alana-house/about-alana-house</p> <p>Prison Reform Trust (PRT)
www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk</p> <p>Revolving Doors
www.revolving-doors.org.uk</p> | <p>Treasures Foundation
www.treasuresfoundation.org.uk</p> <p>Unlock www.unlock.org.uk</p> <p>User Voice www.uservoice.org</p> <p>Women in Prison
www.womeninprison.org.uk</p> <p>Women's Budget Group (UK WBG) www.wbg.org.uk</p> |
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With thanks to our Partners and funders

Partners



Funders




Acronyms (A-Z)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>APPG - All-Party Parliamentary Group</p> <p>CJS - Criminal Justice System</p> <p>CRS - Community Rehabilitation Services</p> <p>FOS – Female Offenders Strategy</p> <p>HMPPS - His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service</p> <p>ISR - Independent Sentencing Review</p> <p>MoJ - Ministry of Justice</p> <p>NVAP - National Voice & Advisory Panel</p> <p>NWJC - National Women's Justice Coalition</p> | <p>PDG – Partnership Delivery Group</p> <p>RR3 - Reducing Reoffending Third Sector Advisory Group</p> <p>VAWG - Violence Against Women and Girls</p> <p>VCS - Voluntary Community Sector</p> <p>WJB - Women's Justice Board</p> <p>WSA - Whole System Approach</p> <p>WSM - Women's Services Map</p> |
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Get Involved

Visit wearenwjc.org.uk to find out more or email info@weareNWJC.org.uk to get involved

 **National Women's
Justice Coalition**