



PulseSpecial: Women's History Month

PulseSpecial: Women's History Month 2023

We are pleased to publish this special edition of the CordisPulse, which we have produced to mark Women's History Month. This annual observation provides the opportunity to celebrate women's contributions to history, culture and society.

At Cordis Bright we are determined not just to celebrate women's contributions to society, but to continue to shine a light both on areas where gender inequality remains present and on work aiming to combat this. We have therefore produced this Pulse Special, which provides a digest of key reports, briefings and tools published in 2022 and 2023 across the sectors we work in that focus on areas where gender inequality is still evident.

This Pulse Special shows that significant work is still needed to improve outcomes for women and girls across health, adult social care, children's services and criminal justice. For example:

- A report funded by the Nuffield Foundation found that women and girls are likely to have their needs overlooked because they are a minority as perpetrators within the justice system.
- A thematic review of outcomes for girls in custody published by HM Inspectorate of Prisons found that the custodial estate did not function effectively, resulting in poor outcomes for girls.

That said, across our sectors we have seen positive ambitions to address this aim including the publication of the first [Women's Health Strategy for England](#), which aims to tackle the gender health gap and presents the changes the government wants for women's health in the next 10 years. A suite of case studies published by the Local Government Association showcases a breadth of local-level work which responds to the Women's Health Strategy for England. Research from the House of Commons finds that although male graduate earnings continue to be higher than women's on average, women are more likely than men to go to university and to gain a first or upper second-class degree. Further information about the Women's



Health Strategy can be found in a [recent blogpost published on our website](#), which provides an overview of the strategy and its reception.

This is the third in a series of Pulse Specials marking a monthly observance of great significance to us and to the sectors we work in. Look out for the Pulse Special in honour of Pride Month in July 2023.

If you would like to discuss any of the issues raised in this month's Pulse, please do contact us on 020 7330 9170 or email madeleinemorrison@cordisbright.co.uk.

Best wishes,

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If you would prefer not to receive future editions of the CordisPulse, please click 'unsubscribe' at the very end of this email. If you would like to discuss anything that arises from the Pulse (or if there are others who you think would like to receive copies) then please contact Dr Stephen Boxford on stephenboxford@cordisbright.co.uk or 020 7330 9170.

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Publications are in chronological order throughout, with the most recent first.

Adult Social Care and Health

Reports

Local Government Association. Women's Health: How councils are making a difference



September 2022

Women's health
How councils are making
a difference

The Local Government Association states that local government is working to ensure women's health is a priority in all they do. It acknowledges the critical role local government plays in achieving the ambitions of the government's [Women's Health Strategy](#), and presents six case studies which show the breadth of work happening in different local areas in England. These include:

- Lancashire's push to create a menopause-friendly environment for staff.
- Newcastle's social media campaign to get women commonly referred to as "hard-to-reach" to come forward for cervical screening.
- Surrey's work to help women caught up in the criminal justice system.
- Liverpool's establishment of hubs to improve access to reproductive and sexual health services.

The Department of Health and Social Care. Women's Health Strategy for England

July 2022



The Department of Health and Social Care published this strategy which builds on their [Vision for the Women's Health Strategy for England](#) (published in December 2021). The strategy is informed by a call for evidence published in 2021, which reiterated that healthcare systems are failing women because NHS services are not designed to meet women's day-to-day needs.

This first Women's Health Strategy for England aims to be the next step on the journey to reset the dial on women's health. It sets out a six-point long-term plan for transformational change, with the following headlines:

- Ensuring women's voices are heard.
- Improving access to services.
- Addressing disparities in outcomes among women.
- Better information and education.
- Greater understanding of how women's health affects their experience in the workplace.



- Supporting more research, improving the evidence base and spearheading the drive for better data.

Briefings

The King's Fund. Reducing women's health inequalities in the most-deprived areas

June 2022

The King's Fund noted that the [Women's Health Strategy](#) was an opportunity to improve the lives of all women, and especially those in lower socio-economic areas.

This is a recording of a free online event, where an expert panel discuss the challenges to improving women's health in the most-deprived areas of England and explored what needs to happen on the ground to narrow the health inequalities gap and improve diagnosis, early interventions, and treatment for women. The event looked at learning from successful case studies and how this could be applied across different pathways.



Children and Young People's Services

Reports

The Nuffield Family Justice Observatory. Mothers in recurrent care proceedings: New evidence for England and Wales

November 2022

This summary highlights the key findings of research that provides an updated picture of the scale and pattern of mothers in recurrent care proceedings in England and Wales data produced routinely by Cafcass and Cafcass Cymru between 2011/12 and 2020/21.

The Nuffield Family Justice Observatory noted the following key findings:

- In England and Wales approximately one in four women is at risk of returning to court for subsequent care proceedings within 10 years of their first appearance in care proceedings.
- Approximately one in five mothers who return to court with a new child (as opposed to the child who was the subject of previous proceedings) is at risk of returning to court within 10 years.
- The risk of returning to court is highest within the first three years of the initial proceedings.
- The risk of returning to court is higher for mothers who first gave birth when young and if the child in the first set of proceedings is subject to a placement order (plan for adoption).

Children's Commissioner. "We deserve better" – young people's views on public sexual harassment

August 2022

In this blog post, the Children's Commissioner reflects the voices of girls who talked about the issue of public harassment in response to a Big Ask survey. Teenage girls wrote about feeling unsafe and intimidated in public spaces, and about how this undermines their self-confidence and ability to participate in the wider community. They described a society which downplays and accepts public harassment, and the ways they feel responsible for their own protection strategies.

Briefings

House of Commons. Equality of access and outcomes in higher education in England

January 2023

This briefing paper looks at equality in undergraduate education in England. It summarises the latest data from the Department for Education (DfE), the Office for Students (OfS), and UCAS on access and outcomes before looking at Government policy, the role of the OfS, and the actions and responsibilities of universities.



Evidence suggests that women are much more likely to go to university than men and have been for many years. They are also more likely to complete their studies and gain a first or upper second-class degree. However, after graduation, men are more likely to be in 'highly skilled' employment or further study just after graduation. Male graduate average earnings are around 9% higher than female earnings one year after graduation. This earnings gap grows substantially over their early careers and reaches 31% ten years after graduation.



Criminal Justice

Reports

Women's Aid. The Domestic Abuse Report 2023: The Annual Audit

THE DOMESTIC ABUSE REPORT 2023
THE ANNUAL AUDIT

January 2023

The Domestic Abuse Report 2023: The Annual Audit gives an overview of the domestic abuse support services available in England, including provision and usage, during the financial year 2021–22. This reporting period saw the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act (2021) and so the Annual Audit 2023 explores the impact of the statutory duty placed on local authorities to fund support in safe accommodation for survivors of domestic abuse.



HM Inspectorate of Prisons. A thematic review of outcomes for girls in custody

September 2022

This report found that outcomes for girls in the youth custodial estate were poor in key areas, and girls faced significant challenges when they were released or transferred to the adult estate. Six concerns were identified that require cross-departmental work to ensure some of the most vulnerable girls in the country are given effective care and support:

1. A lack of alternative provision and intervention meant that custody was not always justified or used as a last resort.
2. The national system for caring for girls in custody did not function well; often girls with the highest level of need were placed into the institution with the least resources.
3. Girls were far more likely than boys to harm themselves, experience restraint and to be involved in violence during their time in custody.
4. Girls who needed tier 4 mental health beds waited too long for transfer to hospital.
5. Transition plans had little impact on the day-to-day experience of young women when they were transferred to the adult estate.
6. Suitable accommodation was not secured early enough before release.

Mayor of London. Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls

June 2022

The Mayor's refreshed Strategy brings together the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) and the GLA with the VAWG sector, local authorities, police, Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), National Probation Service (NPS) and the NHS, working as equal partners across London to focus on those directly involved in the different crimes that comprise VAWG. It sets out a range of actions that they aim to take in London over the coming years to tackle the perpetrators, to support victims and survivors, and to rebuild the confidence of women and girls in the police and CJS. This will be supported by a further investment of £5m each year in MOPAC's commissioned services.

The Strategy is about working together with the specialist VAWG sector, to tackle and prevent VAWG. It includes campaigns to confront and challenge misogynistic attitudes and behaviours within society, particularly amongst men and boys in London; improving safe accommodation provision for victims of domestic abuse and their families, and greater investment in services for victims and survivors of VAWG; strengthening programmes to



intervene and address the behaviour of perpetrators; and making change to the way the police investigate rape and sexual assault through Operation Soteria Bluestone.

The Nuffield Foundation. Disrupting the Routes between Care and Custody for Girls and Women

May 2022

Funded by the Nuffield Foundation, this research study explores the neglected experiences of imprisoned women from care, as well as those of care-experienced girls and young women in the community with youth justice system contact. As a minority within the justice system, girls and women are particularly likely to have their needs overlooked.

This study reveals how girls in care may experience 'over-scrutiny' in some care settings, leading to their unnecessary criminalisation, which contrasts directly to the lack of support they may face in relation to experiences of victimisation, leaving care support and imprisonment. Highlighting evidence of the 'immense harm' that can come from imprisonment, the report states: *"Prison must cease to be a default option when the lack of support in care and the community essentially helps to reproduce the well-trodden routes between care and custody"*. It also urges 'far greater recognition' of the profound impact of imprisonment across the generations, particularly on care-experienced mothers.

House of Commons. Improving outcomes for women in the criminal justice system

April 2022

The Ministry published its Female Offender Strategy in 2018 after many years of concern about the experience of women in the Criminal Justice System (CJS). Women in the CJS have a higher incidence of prior domestic abuse and mental health issues compared to men; their offences are generally less serious and present lower risk of serious harm to the public; they are more likely to be in custody for shorter periods (including the use of remand) with poor rehabilitation outcomes; and a self-harm rate nearly five times as high in women's prisons as in men's. The impact of women's imprisonment is greater on children as women are more likely to be their main carers.

This report draws the following conclusions:

1. The 2018 Female Offender Strategy was widely welcomed but progress since then has been limited and it is unclear how much of the additional money allocated to the Ministry will be spent on services for women.
2. Despite the emphasis on community provision in the strategy, the Ministry has not yet quantified how much funding is required or invested heavily in community services for women.
3. Effective implementation of the strategy has been undermined by insufficient joined-up working.
4. The Ministry is taking some steps to address the needs of ethnic minorities in the CJS, but it recognises that it has not yet done enough to achieve equality of outcomes for ethnic minority women.
5. It is not clear how Parliament, the public and other stakeholders can hold the Ministry to account for delivery of the strategy's commitments.
6. The Ministry does not yet know the effectiveness of its interventions, or whether it is achieving its aims. This limits its ability to identify and share best practice and to understand where it needs to invest to achieve its aims.



National Audit Office. Improving outcomes for women in the criminal justice system

January 2022

Concerns that the criminal justice system (CJS) is not responsive to the specific needs of women are longstanding. Women are a minority in the CJS and accounted for just 4% of the prison population as of September 2021. In 2007, following the deaths of six women at Styal prison within a year, the government commissioned the Corston Report. The report stressed that the underlying reasons why men and women offend and their response to interventions and rehabilitation differed. It therefore suggested a different approach was needed to achieve equality of outcomes for women.

The National Audit Office's report concludes that while there is clear value in the aims of the government's 2018 Female Offender Strategy, the Ministry established a programme to oversee implementation of the strategy but it did not prioritise investment in the programme, even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Progress in implementing activities has therefore been limited.

Briefings

Prison Reform Trust. Invisible Women: Understanding women's experiences of long-term imprisonment. Briefing 2: Hope, health, and staff-prisoner relationships

February 2023

In the last thirty years, the number of women serving an indeterminate sentence has grown from 96 in 1991, to 370 in June 2022. However, the lack of visibility of women serving long prison sentences in policy and advocacy debates means their experiences are not fully recognised.

Published as part of the Building Futures programme, this briefing is informed by working group discussions, letters and emails from women serving long sentences, overwhelmingly, the women talk about hope, health and staff relationships. This briefing makes positive recommendations to address the concerns.



Prison Reform Trust. Why focus on reducing women's imprisonment?

August 2022

This briefing provides a concise and informative explanation of the need to focus on reducing the imprisonment of women in England and Wales. It contains statistics on the number of women imprisoned, the characteristics of women in prison and the drivers to their offending, as well as information about community-based services and solutions.



HM Inspectorate of Prisons. Focus on women's prisons. A briefing paper from HM Inspectorate of Prisons

February 2022



This briefing paper describes the findings, best practice and key areas for improvement from inspections of five women's prisons: HMP Send, HMP & YOI Low Newton, HMP & YOI Downview, HMP & YOI Styal and HMP & YOI Foston Hall.

The paper sets out some common issues for women in prison, summarises the main findings from the five inspections, and highlights examples of good practice which improved outcomes for women. The paper also makes several recommendations aiming to improve outcomes for women in prison.