

Andy Slaughter MP
Chair, Justice Select Committee
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

MoJ ref: SUB132648

16 March 2026

Dear Andy,

WOMEN IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

I am writing to update the Committee on the government's work to improve outcomes for women in or at risk of contact with the criminal justice system, following publication of the Women's Justice Board report on Monday 16 March.

Women represent a small minority of those in custody and on community sentences, but face disproportionately complex needs, including higher rates of domestic and sexual abuse, trauma, mental ill-health, substance misuse, and a greater likelihood of being primary carers. These factors reinforce the importance of ensuring women can access effective, gender-specific support and of intervening earlier in order to divert them from entering custody.

At the request of the Deputy Prime Minister, and at my request, the Women's Justice Board has recently produced a report offering reflections and recommendations to reduce the number of women in prison and to ensure women receive the support they need across the system to turn their lives around. We are now going to consider carefully the recommendations in the report and how we are best able to deliver reform in this area.

Alongside the report's publication, I have issued a Written Ministerial Statement announcing a significant uplift to funding for women's community and voluntary organisations. The Government will provide an additional £10 million in funding over the Spending Review period, bringing total funding over this period to £31.6 million. This multi-year investment will support sustainable service provision and strengthen diversion pathways.

As we shift from strategy to delivery, the Women's Justice Board will now come to an end, and a new Women's Justice Advisory Group will be established. The Group will offer external insight, expert advice and constructive challenge to support implementation in this next phase of reform.

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Improving outcomes for women in the criminal justice system remains a priority for this government, and I will ensure the Committee is kept updated as this vital work progresses.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James', written in a cursive style.

Lord Timpson
Minister for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending

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