



Sir Robert Neill MP.

01 November 2021

Chairman of the Justice Committee

Parliament

London SW1 0AA

By email

Dear Sir Robert,

Women in Prison Inquiry

Thank you very much for the opportunity to provide oral evidence on Safe Homes for Women Released from Prison to this Justice Committee inquiry, alongside Laura Seebohm and Vicky Davis.

We wanted to clarify the point that arose towards the end of our evidence session on October 19th about the proportion of women in prison on short vs long sentences. Criminal justice statistics as you know can be confusing and it's very important not to conflate annual receptions, which include 'short stays', and the snapshot prison population figure which will show fewer of these. It's likely that Dr Mullan's figures are taken from Offender Management Statistics 31 March 2021 (showing 121 women sentenced to less than a year). By contrast the latest receptions figures, which capture the number of people actually flowing through the gates rather than the population at a moment in time, show that between April and June 2021, 816 women entered prison to serve a custodial sentence and of those 411 (50%) were sentenced to six months or less, and a further 87 (11%) were serving more than six months to less than 12 months, i.e. 61%—and that is just one quarter's worth of data. Looking over the last 12 months the proportion of women entering prison to serve a custodial sentence of less than 12 months rose to 64%—nearly two in three women. Women may also be recalled to prison – this has been an additional 'churn' factor since the *Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014* introduced post custody supervision with minimal support. We have added a note of the sources we have used at the end of our letter. As long as women are being sent to prison for short periods – on remand, sentence or recall – it is essential that resettlement and rehabilitation arrangements reflect that reality.

We are pleased that the Prisons Minister Victoria Atkins MP and senior MoJ & HMPPS officials are appearing before the Committee on 2 November. We look forward to hearing their evidence about exactly what measures are being put in place in all 12 women's prisons to ensure that women are not released homeless, and if they are released into temporary accommodation, it is safe (eg not mixed sex hostels, not sofa surfing, not at risk of returning to an abusive partner) and accompanied by support into longer term and suitable housing, especially for women with dependent children.

Thereafter we look forward to the Committee's report early next year and especially your recommendations for ensuring women are released from prison to safe and satisfactory housing.

Yours sincerely

John Plummer, Jenny Earle, Sarah Tubbs, Sarah Jane Vernon
Safe Homes for Women Leaving Prison Team

Cc. Holly Tremain, Committee Specialist (Prisons & Probation), Justice Select Committee

Statistical sources

Table 1.1. Ministry of Justice. (2021). *Offender management statistics quarterly: April to June 2021*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/offender-management-statistics-quarterly-april-to-june-2021>

Table 2.5a. Ministry of Justice. (2021). *Offender management statistics quarterly: April to June 2021*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/offender-management-statistics-quarterly-april-to-june-2021>