

Women's Programmes around Scotland

April 2025



Community Justice Peer Network kindly forwarded a request for information about women's programmes around Scotland and the response has been encouraging. This desk-top study is ongoing but for now you can find the 19 responses below. Recurring themes are highlighted and an attempt to summarise the findings follows. It seems to be accepted across the board that women present with such complex needs that they are often being 'set up to fail' if they are i.e. sent to UPW. Ideally Social Work recommend in their report to the Sheriff that women given a CPO join a women's programme and can build upon a relationship with one allocated social worker. This requires a committed worker who knows the interventions and can draw on local services offering a one-stop-shop and holistic approach. It requires a safe place and a one-to-one approach initially, building in daily routines, until the women are strong enough in themselves to join a weekly group. Multi-agency collaboration with housing, benefits, children & family, child plan mtgs, Women's Aid, psychiatry, public health, third sector is likely to have the best results. Interventions are first focussed on their biological needs, then psychological and finally social skills, and include: Support with appointments, walking and talking, mental health assessment and therapy; progressing to Cycle of Change; Planning for Change; Trauma Informed; Window of Tolerance; SMART Recovery; Decider Skills; Alternative therapies and then group activities. Groups work best with max 8 women at a time to allow for the forming and storming process. Activities can be held in centres, polytunnels, hubs, woodlands, and mostly through co-production include wellbeing, crafting, beauty, teamwork, games, bush craft and the above interventions etc. Important to build trust and relationships for best results and then not to drop them after their sentence is completed by possibly offering voluntary contact for 3 - 6months as well as community involvement. Also recommended to have monthly multidisciplinary meetings about the women. All the above requires services to buy into the need for a gender specific approach stemming from [The Commission on Women Offenders Report \(2012\) by Dame Elish Angiolini](#) highlighting the need for a more holistic approach in order to achieve better results for women in the justice system. The Connections Programme is recommended, here is an [interview](#) with, and [paper](#) by Stephanie Covington who designed it.

*There is a National Women's Justice Network group who meet regularly online to share best practice.

Aberdeenshire: Courses	"A number of women have been undertaking 'Own My Life' courses which have proved transformative in enabling women who have been subjected to abuse to regain ownership of their lives. The SPS have an approved Programme "Ultimate Self". We don't deliver it at Grampian – the women need to transfer to HMP Polmont to access it. Need is assessed using Generic Programme Assessment. All women have a personal officer, who provide support and signposting during their time in custody."
-------------------------------	---

Angus - Glen Isla and Glen Clova projects	"Involvement in the Glen Isla project is court mandated and Glen Clova is voluntary. The projects both take a therapeutic and trauma informed approach to supporting women to meet their goals and reduce reoffending (Glen Isla) or prevent involvement in the Justice System (Clova). The projects are staffed by a team of Justice Social Workers and Support Workers - currently 3 social workers and 6 support workers. Women involved in the project receive one to one and group support and work on creative projects."
Ayrshire: Women's Hub	"The Women's Hub offers a drop-in service to women and helps combat social isolation... SACRO provides counselling services targeted to women, including those impacted by domestic abuse."
East Renfrewshire: Pilot for Group Work with Women Offenders	"Through support by the Justice Service for funding of Spousal Assault Risk Assessment training and Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy training, we have commenced a pilot focusing on group-work with females convicted of offending."
Edinburgh: Willow Service	"The Willow service has retained a model based on trauma-informed principles and the research and evidence related to this population, whilst also ensuring equity of service for all women across the city and integrating a 'no wrong door' approach. Dedicated provision for all women has been a vision for justice services for many years and is supported by the trauma-informed design of the Women's Centre, creating an environment which is welcoming, respectful, and safe. Women using Willow were consulted about their experiences of using the service, comments included: <i>'When I first came to Willow, I was anxious and did not trust any of the workers... The support they gave me was fantastic.'</i> <i>'Meeting the other women, talking in groups and going out and doing things with Willow I wouldn't normally think of doing or feel confident doing has really helped.'</i>"
Falkirk Council Justice Women's Centre	"The Women's Justice Service in Falkirk is a small team (4) who work only with women open to Justice on any order. We work from a separate building and do not allow any male partners/ friends/ family members to attend. We run a variety of things for women in this area. We currently have a Decider Skills group running for women over a period of 6 weeks, it is a rolling programme. This is run by our staff in conjunction with the Justice CPN (who works with men and women) and the NHS Keepwell nurse (also works with men and women). This group looks uses CBT to help individuals recognise their own thoughts, feelings and behaviours enabling them to monitor and manage their own emotions and mental health. The Skills can be used as a waiting list for brief therapeutic intervention and as part of a treatment plan. The staff members that are trained can also do these individually if a group work setting is not suitable. This is suitable for more vulnerable women. Referrals come from the SW team, and so it is not specifically funded as these people are funded to work in Justice. We have an office with a separate big room that is used for groups. We also offer drop in coffee mornings where we provide tea and cake and we invite various services in to discuss their services and build up referrals. We also have a group run by the Cyrenians looking at

	numeracy specifically for women (we asked for this as it is run for men elsewhere) based in our office, this is a partner agency funded to work with Justice Service users, they come to the office and we provide the referrals. We are also hosting a group run by Change, Grow, Live who are funded to work with Justice service users, this will be a group specifically for women and will cover harm reduction, and substance misuse issues. This is due to start in March the CGL worker is based in Justice and will run the group for any women who is open to them. There is no additional funding required for any of the above. We ensure we have a staff member from our service in all groups to support the other agency and deal with any issues that arise.
Fife: Unpaid Work for Women	"New initiatives regarding unpaid work for women focus on providing opportunities that are community-based, person-centred, and trauma-informed . This includes a weekly sewing group at Greener Kirkcaldy, making bonding hearts for babies in the local neonatal unit, and alternating unpaid work projects at the Scottish Deer Centre and Lochore Meadows Country Park."
Glasgow - Tomorrow's Women Glasgow	"Provides a person-centred support service to women involved in offending, and we also have a women's problem solving court established in Glasgow Sheriff Court. I can put you in contact with the service manager, Claire, who oversees both, and also manages the social worker we have placed in the Liliac Centre, the SPS Community Custody Unit in Glasgow, and she could share more details with you. "In addition to the people carrying out their CPOs, this year we also invited the women from the Liliac Centre and dedicated a session just to them, ensuring a safe and relaxed environment."
Highland Women's Programme (ended early 2020)	"Women coming through Inverness SW team would be allocated to one gender specific social worker who would recommend to the Sherrif that the women attend the Women's Programme. This was initially 1-2-1 trauma informed time in order to meet the basic needs of the client drawing on other available services/activities where needed. When the women were strong enough they would join the weekly outing by minibus to Abriachan Forest centre where they would continue with group activities indoors or outdoor incl nature based projects. They enjoyed the minibus, change of scene and activities on offer at Abriachan both indoors and outdoors. They were empowered to choose the activities. A sleepover was hugely successful as were the weekly checkins. Around the campfire we made music and looked at Decider Skills 54321, Cycle of Change (relapse/triggers) etc. Good relationships were essential with ie Osprey House, ApexHighland etc"

Inverclyde: Women in Justice Support Group	"The 'Women in Justice Support Group' is made up of women with lived experience of the justice system or who are at risk of coming into the justice system. Co-production is at the heart of the group, with discussions and activities driven by the women themselves. During the reporting year, the group published a second leaflet involving what it means to be bailed for the preparation of a Justice Social Work Report and what it means to be subject to a Community Payback Order."
Midlothian: Spring Service	"Spring is a service for women aged eighteen or older, who are resident in Midlothian and who are either involved with the Justice system or <i>at risk</i> of coming into contact with the Justice system. Often the women we support have experienced past or current traumatic experiences, may be struggling with their mental health/substance misuse and may be in, or have been in, relationships where they are not safe. The Spring service offers a twelve-week group work programme aimed at supporting women to better understand their life experiences, how these may have impacted upon them, and to support them to develop effective coping skills and strategies. Women can go on to complete this group work programme a number of times - with recognition of the impact from trauma and / or substance misuse on a person's ability to retain and process information. Through other group work activities, Spring also supports women to build confidence and self-esteem; to manage difficult emotions and stressful situations; and to improve their overall health and wellbeing. Women attending will be supported individually out with group and will have access to a range of different professionals including Social Workers, a registered Nurse and Occupational Therapist, along with other workers from partner agencies with backgrounds in mental health and gender-based violence."
Moray Women's Programme: RISE Unpaid Work Squad	"RISE is a person centred, trauma informed programme for women. Focusing on the person behind the offences. We provide a rolling group programme offering a range of health and wellbeing activities to women in the justice system. It is delivered by justice services and local partners to encourage improved wellbeing, participation and increase confidence in accessing community supports and a referral out of justice services. The group meet weekly at the justice social work polytunnel and no men's groups will run at the same time to ensure this feels a safe space for attendees." It is voluntary (time does come off their UPW) and the women are involved in setting the agenda...often choosing health and wellbeing topics. We have fantastic partners in Moray with regards to services who understand the needs of woman in touch with justice and want to be involved in supporting them to develop and grow. Partnership with moray health improvement team links to research around health inequalities / stigma / justice services – the funding is sourced by health improvement team for the wellbeing programmes. This is a rolling programme and we are established in year 3, with all partners returning for more. Although some sessions don't require any funding, community partners are keen to support, for example Moray UHI support students to practice treatments etc, moray women's aid, moray rape crisis, adult learning team all have budgets to use as justice woman tick all funding boxes in terms of needs.

	Polytunnel – this is funded by justice however also part of unpaid work etc and not sure of costs but it's a space shared with Moray food bank and sometimes other community groups e.g. refugees. Had two successful summer programmes to date and this has encouraged some members to attend college digital media classes, supported parenting with art techniques learned but mostly individuals have felt a sense of happiness and peace during these programmes. Winter venue at The Bow – a free shared space with ARROWS who are happy to support as all have a common interest to support individuals in the justice system with addiction etc. Here we connect individuals with services making them more likely to use it and feel less intimidated. Our focus is on wellbeing, building self-confidence, self-esteem, support to address responsivity factors etc with a view to promoting engagement one to one programme work and linking in with appropriate community resources to support referral out of justice system. We have links with moray rape crisis, specific female health checks, moray womans aid etc, we ask group participants what they find helpful and what support/interests/educations etc they would like to find out more about etc. We provide one to one support from support worker to promote initial engagement and support needs. This will include transport in initial stages etc. Also, if they require one to one support at group, we would encourage social workers or support workers to support initial engagement. Referral process – in house open to justice system social workers/support workers make referral, group agreement in place addresses conduct and group rules etc. Assessment and evaluation – outcome star for all woman in touch with justice services initial, review and ending to see progress and change. Service developments: Pilot counselling service, 4 women currently engaging – open to woman nearing end of order and ready to engage. Watch video here.”
Perth and Kinross: One-Stop Women's Learning Service (OWLS)	"OWLS was initially established to work with women on Community Payback Orders but has expanded to include those on Throughcare Licences, Supervised Release Orders, Bail Supervision, Diversion from Prosecution, and women who occasionally need support after completing statutory orders. OWLS is currently supporting 58+ women at their centre. OWLS has its own building a short walk away from the main SW offices. From the start women were consulted regarding the mission statement and the design of the spaces in the centre, so as to remove all barriers and to empower them to make informed choices. It is not like a SW space at all, it is relaxed and comfy, no one wears badges or sits behind desks. The women chose the furniture and painted murals on the walls. Coproduction continues to be at the heart of OWLS. We offer 1-2-1 trauma informed work, emotional regulation, healthy relationships, SMART goals, strengths and weaknesses etc. We create a support package for each individual woman depending on her needs. We often draw on other services and charities to meet these needs especially around domestic abuse, sexual assault, housing, welfare rights etc. Our group work requires min 3 women and focusses on trauma. We meet at the centre on the day that suits majority of women, and also eat lunch all together. The facilitators are trained inhouse on listening to disclosures and on understanding their own trauma. There is always a staff debrief afterwards.

	There are two drop-ins per week where women can do arts/crafts, sowing, cook lunch themselves, do jigsaws or we might have an activity prepared like art therapy, cookery courses, typing. We will also arrange for literature courses at the local college etc. Women can present in crisis. OWLS is fully funded by SW and is all indoors. They have a group work room, large multipurpose dining room and kitchen, large lounge room, plus 3 more rooms. They have 2 key workers (CJ assistants), 3 SWs, 1 Coordinator and 1 mentor. There is also a separate age 16-26 youth service and a men's service. UPW has gardens and polytunnels but runs separately and is not gender specific, some women are placed there by the Sherriff. <i>Please come and visit!"</i>
Renfrewshire: Women's Community Justice Service	The Angiolini report made us look at our service and in 2014 we set up a statutory service just for women in a separate building. We accept women from diversion through to life licence. All orders come to us. Few women are willing to join the UPW squad as they are often the only female. A greater cohort choose the women's only UPW workshop at the Community Service hub. The staff build on the women's LSCMI national risk assessment for the court report and then do a deeper dive into their criminogenic needs to give a wider picture on how to prioritise their needs through the programme. We pursue wider support for addressing addictions, housing, mental health etc. Our group work programme is called CONNECTIONS for medium to high risk women. It's a package that can be purchased, it was created by Stephanie Covington and we've been using it since 2018. It's not accredited and so social workers can tweak the content as well as be directed by the needs of the group. We have 2 staff running this group. We have max 8 women, min 5, which allows for attrition, so we sometimes end up with 2 or 3. Depending on the size and chattiness of the group it can run between 12 – 16 weeks. We now only run two groups each year. The women feel high anxiety levels at the thought of joining a group (their last group experience was likely at school and was not positive, and also not knowing what is going to be asked of them and fears that it'll be intrusive) and so it is important to build up the rapport with their SW for a few months (if they are new to the justice system) to bed in and to understand what is expected of them before introducing them to the staff who run the group with pre-sessions. It can take a few weeks to allay their fears, but by week 3 they love it. The Connections Programme covers healthy relationships and boundaries, consequential thinking, skills to reflect before they react, also we weave in Decider skills. The group is based at the hub which is not an ideal location to be fair. We partner with a charity - Kairos Women+ – Renfrewshire's community-led women's space— collaboratively creating opportunities for women via workshops, events and courses. Together we are developing stronger links for women while on an order so that they are networked into this centre and can then continue to receive the support and connection after their involvement with justice services completes. Since SHINE stopped there is a gap in services, so we want to enhance the scope of what KAIROS can offer to develop a mentoring service. Measuring impact: So much amazing work has been done, and we've got lots of anecdotal evidence. Demonstrating impact has not been a priority but we are looking into it more now. The workload is greater with women as once you gained their trust then they'll need more time/support.

Scottish Borders: ReConnect Women's Programme	"ReConnect is a 15-week women's programme focusing on improving wellbeing and emotional regulation, providing a framework for better decision-making, self-efficacy, and reducing reoffending."
Shetland Islands Council - Phenomenal Women's Group	"In Shetland we have run a woman's group for 4 years. It is coming to an end due to funding ending and us not seeking further funding as the women have all moved on—mostly to positive destinations. The group was jointly run but JSW and a local third sector agency, Space2face. They provide restorative justice via art and we have referred into them as part of someone's CPO in order for clients to undertake RJ work. We became aware that women were less likely to agree to take part in the process of RJ, and believed that there were a number of factors which contributed to this. It was felt that the intersectionality of issues including low self-esteem explained this, but felt too that Space2face did not have a 'presence' within the female offending community. The group was initially for JSW clients or recent JSW clients. Some of the women knew each other, some did not. We had a cohort of 4 women which rose to 6 – for Shetland this was a reasonable number of attendees and that number never changed although the attendees did. The Phenomenal Women's Group, (from the Maya Angelou poem of the same name) initially ran weekly for 2 hours a week, although after two years became fortnightly (due to funding and women's availability). It is an art based group that looks at different female artists who have experienced adversity as a means of opening up discussion about various adversities (drug use, DA, sexual abuse, isolation) whilst using their art medium to undertake an activity during the session (mosaic, stitching etc). The art has been a really integral part of the success of the group because of the positives which come from creating/making. Initially this group was run for women who had gone through the justice system, but latterly opened its doors to other vulnerable women in the community via the local drug service and mental health service. There was a short assessment process that the women went through before joining the group in order to ascertain their ability to engage rather than to highlight their specific needs. Space2face already had a room that could be used and this was away from the social work offices which we felt was important. Support out with the group was offered by the JSW support worker. She has offered one to one support, tea and chat meet ups and phone support. The self-esteem and belief in their own artistic ability led to some women accessing taster art sessions at the local college with four woman completing art modules and two enrolling in degree courses full time. Initially the group was funded by Justice Social Work and then, after two years, via island specific grant funding. The cost has been minimal because the JSW Support Worker's costs were nil and they provided all of the in-between support work, which meant that it was only the two hour group session (plus two hours planning) each week that was paid for through the grant.

	There has always been the ability to support women on a one to one basis if required through the justice social work support worker, although we have also signposted women on as required. The group has been successful due to the venue which has been accessible and mainstream (not a council building but a wellness centre), the art work which has given the women creative activities to help alleviate stress and anxiety and the themes of each session which have guided the group discussion. We also brought in health snacks to support healthy living and had a group chat to allow peer support between session. We supported women to attend practically, which has included offering lifts both to/from the group, often with a stop at the local supermarket so women could get a lift home with their shopping. We have evaluated the group and found that from self-report, overall self-esteem grew, risk of offending fell, drug use fell, support networks increased and exclusion issues were felt to have been addressed. I was instrumental in setting up the group (when I was a Justice Social Worker, with groupwork experience) and feel that it benefitted from having two experienced workers. We definitely worked more than the two hours planning/two hours group session at the start to make it all happen) and throughout offering lifts and support out with the group. It took about 6 weeks of no shows before the group gained traction - getting the women to engage initially took a lot of work but I already had working relationships with some of the women as they were clients/ex-clients of mine and this helped."
South Lanarkshire Council's Women's Justice Service	"The Women's Justice Service is a voluntary service for women involved in the Justice system that offers support through community-based hubs across South Lanarkshire. We seek to create a positive and safe space for women to come and receive tailored support for their specific needs. The Women's Justice Service creates positive social opportunities, either in the hubs or through various activities across the local area. This can focus on specific issues such as managing finances, mental health, substance abuse and domestic abuse. Within the hubs women can link in with peer support, support from Women's Justice Service staff, as well as linking in with other professional and local community-based organisations. All women will be dealt with dignity, respect, and compassion." There is no specific programme for Women involved in Justice. However, women involved with Justice in South Lanarkshire can be referred into the Womens's Justice Service for support primarily through hubs. The is a voluntarily service for women who are on a statutory order. The Women's Justice Service runs various programmes in hubs that are designed and tailored to the needs of the females in the service. The Women's Justice Service is a female only (participants) service within South Lanarkshire Justice Team. It is only females who are participants and as such, activities and programmes are aimed at issues surrounding women. This can include work with or alongside Health Teams that focus on women's issues such as menopause or specific cancers/screenings. We also link in with partners and offer support and activities based around issues mainly or solely impacting females such as domestic abuse, financial support and benefit advice.

	All activities are designed to be trauma informed and are tailored to the women participating which can include various levels of vulnerability inside or outside of the hubs. Depending on the type or extent of vulnerability activities would be varied. We have examples of self-esteem programmes and workshops supported by Women's Aid as well as advocacy and peer support advice for those in addiction. We work with various partners and our hubs are led based on women's needs. We have hubs across South Lanarkshire and use various techniques to engage women either partnering with Justice staff to support hub attendance to meeting women in the community and supporting attendance. Our hubs are weekly and women can attend any hub they choose. The hubs last for 3 hours and include time for check ins, 121 work as well as group activity or input from partners. The hubs are the main area of support. These are facilitated by Justice Social Work Assistants with input from the women participating as well as being manager by Team Leader in locality office. The women should be open to Justice services and following a discussion with the female and relevant Justice staff (Social Work, Unpaid Work etc) a referral is made to Women's Justice Service. This is subsequently discussed and risk assessed with referrer and Women's Justice Service Team. A decision is then made, and the female or referrer contact to close down or progress referral with the aim of the female attending a hub. As part of this an exit plan may also be discussed at this stage where clear intentions/goals are set. The Women's Justice service is funded via a ringfenced budget from Justice Services and integrates with statutory bodies via regular communication and using shared system case notes. It is possible to offer 121 in specific circumstances, however the service aims for hub support and any 121 works would dependent on individuals' circumstances. If extensive 121 support is required the female may be referred to another service which could meet needs more. There is a small ringfenced budget from South Lanarkshire Council Justice Social Work to support the running of the hubs. This includes travelling expenses for women, resources as well as food and beverages to be used in the hubs. It would be beneficial for any service to have a clear aim and objective as well as a referral process. You are invited to attend a hub or meet us in person or over teams to discuss more specifics.
West Dunbartonshire: Integrated Women and Children's Support	"Justice (social work) have funded integrated Women and Children's support to the Caledonian programme from Circle and Women's Aid, focusing on supporting survivors of domestic abuse."
West Lothian: Creative Activities in Unpaid Work	"Women's activities in the unpaid work redesign include opportunities for developing skills and building confidence through creative and community-focused activities ."

For more information please contact:

Email: gabrielle.buist@highlandtsi.org.uk

Mobile: 07552 229 554 **Office:** 01349 864289

Website: highlandtsi.org.uk/community-justice-partnership

Signposting: <https://highlandcjp.org.uk/>

Facebook: facebook.com/CommunityJusticeHighland

X: [@HighlandCJP](https://twitter.com/HighlandCJP)