

Have Your Say

What do you think of the government's ideas? Do you have better ideas about how the criminal justice system could be more effective at stopping offending and re-offending?

Use this form or send us a letter to tell the government what you think (you don't have to answer all of the questions). If you are feeling creative why not send a poem or a cartoon or a picture in response – they will have lots of comments to read so something eye-catching will help make your responses stand out! We will collect all the responses and put them together to give the government and make sure they hear what you have to say.

Tell the government...

What do you think the main differences are between men and women in the criminal justice system?

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What should the government be doing to help keep women out of prison?

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Would you prefer support which is:

- Separate from your sentence
Connected to your sentence
Both types of support
Don't mind
Don't know

What do you think about the government's ideas about...

...working prisons?

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...tougher community sentences?

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...drug rehabilitation?

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... more use of fines?

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Why do you think it is important for the government to listen to you?

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Anything else you want to tell the government about their plans?

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Name & Prison or City or County (optional)

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Send this sheet to:

Women in Prison
FREEPOST RSLB-UABE-TYRT, Unit 10, The
Ivories, 6 Northampton Street, London, N1 2HY

By 25 February 2011.

We look forward to hearing from you and letting the government know what you think!
We will keep you updated in on Women in Prison magazine.

STOP PRESS!

The Government Wants to Know
What YOU Think of Its Plans!

The Ministry of Justice Green
Paper What it is. What it says.
How you can have your say.

The Ministry of Justice, which is in charge of prisons, has published a Green Paper saying what their plans are to reform prison and the criminal justice system. We have until March to let them know what we think of their ideas and suggest some ideas of our own! Women Moving Forward (facilitated by Women in Prison) is here to help you have your say.

Women Supporting and
in Prison campaigning for
women affected
by the criminal
justice system



What is a Green Paper?

A Green Paper is the first step in the government making new laws and policies. (Why is it called a Green Paper? Because they used to be printed on green paper – not very imaginative but true!)

Journey of a Green Paper?

- 1 The Green Paper:** The government write their first ideas about changes they would like to make in a Green Paper on a particular issue.
- 2 The Consultation:** The government give people a chance to send them comments about the ideas in the Green paper.
- 3 The Response:** The government read all the comments people have sent and might change some of their plans based on what people have said.
- 4 The White Paper:** The government publish a White Paper which says what new policies and laws they are planning. (Why is it called a White Paper? Because, you guessed it, they used to be printed on white paper!)
- 5 New Policy:** The government makes new policy based on the ideas in the Green Paper and the comments from the consultation
- 6 New Law:** The government will bring a Bill containing new law to Parliament where it will be discussed and if it is passed it will become an Act.

Why does this Green Paper matter?

This Green Paper is all about the changes the government wants to make to the criminal justice system – changes to prisons, changes to sentencing, changes to probation. They are suggesting some big changes and this is your chance to let them know what you think.

How to get involved

We want to hear your ideas. The government is asking people what they think of the Green Paper. It is really important that you get your say and that the government hears what you think. Details of how to send us your ideas are on the back.

What is Women Moving Forward?

We are a campaign group for women who have had contact with the criminal justice system and want to work together for change. The group is facilitated by Women in Prison. Write to us at the address on the back if you want to find out more.

What does this Green Paper say?

...about women?

Not much! The Green Paper is 307 paragraphs long. Only 4 paragraphs are about women. The government says “We recognise that women offenders have a different profile of risks and needs.” And they say that there are effective projects supporting women being run by organisations like Women in Prison. But they don’t say if they will do anything to keep them going and expand them. They say that they will set up more intensive community-based drug treatment for women. They don’t make any other commitments about what they are going to do for women.

...about punishment and rehabilitation?

The government say that they want to make sure that people who break the law are punished and that they are made to pay back their “debt to society”. But the government are also saying that they want to focus on rehabilitation because they think it is important to reduce reoffending and that the criminal justice system should tackle the underlying reasons for people committing crime.

...about prison?

The government say that prison is not working properly because too many people commit more crime after they come out of prison. They say that people spend too much time in prison not doing anything and they want to make prisons “places of hard work”. Their suggestion is that prisoners should work a 40 hour week to help people get used to working full time and prepare people for work on release.

...about release?

The government say that more should be done to get people ready for work when they are released and that more should be done to help make sure that people can get housing when they are released.

...about drug rehabilitation?

The government want to get more people off drugs. They want a policy about recovery and not about maintenance. They are going to try out special drug-free rehabilitation wings in prison.

...about mental health?

The government think there are too many people with mental health problems in prison. They are going to try out a scheme where people get assessed whilst they are at court and then get diverted into mental health support instead of prison if that is what they need.

...about paying organisations for support and rehabilitation?

The government wants to save money so they are suggesting that they will only pay organisations whose support can be shown to reduce reoffending (they call this Payment By Results). For example if Women in Prison gave support (for example through the gate support) to 100 women and 46 committed another offence on release Women in Prison would only get paid for the work with the 54 women who did not commit another offence.

To make things simpler for them the government want to pay the same organisations to oversee sentences and to provide support. So they are suggesting that they will not pay for any support services which are not connected to sentences.

The government are saying that they will pay anyone for services which are effective, so your support might come from probation or a charity or a business.

The government are asking if they need a specific way of paying for services for women and if women should have services specifically for them.

...on community sentences?

The government say that people think that community sentences are not harsh enough and they want to make them tougher. They are suggesting that some people could be on tag (HDC) for longer hours and for longer than 12 months. They are also saying that Community Payback should be used more and people should have to do harder work and work longer hours.

...on remand?

The government have seen that too many people are on remand who then don’t get a custodial sentence. They are looking at how to change this.

...on sentencing?

The government say that sentencing is too confusing and too complicated and they want to make it more straight forward. They plan to change the way the Parole Board decides if IPP (Indeterminate Sentence for Public Protection) prisoners can be released because too many IPP prisoners are in over tariff and can’t meet the test for release.

The government say that short sentences are less effective than community sentences but they do not want to get rid of short sentences. The Liberal Democrats made an election promise to abolish short sentences.

The government want the courts to use fines more so instead of having a community sentence people have to pay a fine.