

# The impact of the Women's Pathfinder Whole System Approach and 18-25 Early Intervention Service in Gwent and South Wales



## About the programmes

Two innovative programmes have been introduced in Gwent and South Wales which aim to reach women and young people in contact, or at risk of being in contact, with the criminal justice system. They aim to respond to people's needs to help them avoid offending or reoffending and give them opportunities to improve their lives. The two programmes are:

- The **Women's Pathfinder Whole System Approach (WPWSA)**. This is open to women of all ages, at any point where they become involved or risk becoming involved with the criminal justice system.
- The **18-25 Early Intervention Service (EIS)**. This is open to young people between the ages of 18 and 25, up to the pre-sentence stage. Most people access the programme when they attend a police station.

The programmes are funded by Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), South Wales PCC, Welsh Government and Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS).

They are delivered by a consortium called Future 4, made up of voluntary and community sector and private sector providers. Providers include G4S as lead, Safer Wales, Llamau and Include.

The information in this summary is based on an independent evaluation delivered by Cordis Bright (see: [www.cordisbright.co.uk](http://www.cordisbright.co.uk) for more information) between March 2021 and February 2022. To assess the **impact of the programmes**, the evaluation team interviewed 67 professionals working in Gwent and South Wales and 30 women and young people who used the services. The team also looked at information collected by Future 4 and the police, and 30 case studies about people who used the services.

**Between January 2020 and June 2021**, the programmes reached **over 2,000 people**. The diagram below provides more information about the characteristics of people each programme has supported.

### For the **1,287** women referred to the **Women's Pathfinder Whole System Approach...**

- The **average age** was **35**.
- The **majority** were from a **White background** (96%).
- **40%** had a reported **disability**.

### For the **752** young people referred to the **18-25 Early Intervention Service...**

- The **average age** was **22**.
- The **majority** were from a **White background** (91%).
- 10% had a reported **disability**.
- The **majority** (97%) **were male** and 3% were female.

## The programmes make a positive difference

Evidence from the evaluation suggests the programmes are successfully engaging a range of people and providing them with positive experiences of support. They are

- Improving people's personal outcomes.
- Improving the way people engage with the criminal justice system and other support.
- Beginning to impact on the wider system.

Evidence **collected by Future 4** shows that the interventions are having a positive impact on participants' outcomes in a range of areas. This is measured by asking questions at the start of each participant's support and at the end, using a scale where a score of 0 is worst and 5 is best. The findings are statistically significant. This means we can be 95% certain that these changes have not occurred by chance. The table below summarises these changes in participants' outcomes areas for both the Women's Pathfinder Whole System Approach (WPWSA) and 18-25 Early Intervention Service (EIS).

Outcome area	WPWSA (n=417)			18-25 EIS (n=350)		
	Start	End	Change	Start	End	Change
Health and wellbeing	2.3	3.3	+43%	3.2	4.1	+28%
Life skills	2.6	3.4	+31%	3.3	4.2	+27%
Heathy relationships	2.9	3.5	+21%	4.1	4.5	+10%
Employment	2.2	2.5	+14%	3.5	4.1	+17%
Accommodation	3.6	4.1	+14%	4.3	4.6	+7%
Financial	3.6	4.0	+11%	4.0	4.4	+10%

Evidence collected by the independent evaluation team suggests that people experienced the biggest improvements in health and wellbeing thanks to the support. For example, one participant reported:

*'I feel like I can really talk to [caseworker] and she listens, she doesn't judge, she's very understanding. If I feel a bit depressed or not myself, I can text her and she'll be the spark I need to motivate myself.'*

WPWSA participant

Evaluation evidence also indicated people experience improvements in other areas. They reported:

- Better ability to **engage with education, training and employment** thanks to diversion, practical support and encouragement.
- **Improved relationships** due to support with healthy relationships and parenting skills.
- **Better support and experiences for wider family members** due to increased ability to access services and reduced stress because their relatives are better supported.

- **Positive changes to physical health** due to help tackling substance misuse and encouragement to engage with health services and physical activity.
- **Increased levels of safety**, for example due to support relating to domestic abuse or suicidal feelings.
- **Improvements in financial situation** due to support managing finances.



The evaluation found these positive changes were due to **the programmes...**

- **Engaging people well**, e.g. persisting with people who do not engage initially; offering support when people come into police custody, to address their immediate needs.
- **Being tailored** to what people need in terms of location, type, intensity, and timing. They can provide direct support, signposting and referrals to other services, as well as one-to-one support and/or group sessions.
- **Providing consistent one-to-one support** from the same caseworker allows people to build trusting relationships, and caseworkers' **open, non-judgemental approach** helps people feel listened to and supported.
- **Supportive, rehabilitative, and educational approach** which helps people receive advice and challenge from caseworkers.
- **Offering participants the option to return** for further support if they need to once their initial support period has ended.

The evaluation showed that participants are engaging better with the criminal justice system and other support services. It also found the programmes are contributing to women and young people being diverted away from future contact with the criminal justice system.

The programmes **help some women and young people gain a better understanding of the criminal justice process**. Caseworkers take the time to explain things, which makes the process less intimidating and easier to navigate. As the WPWSA supports women at all stages of their journey through the criminal justice system, some women also have better experiences and outcomes with probation and at court.

*'The case worker wrote me a letter for court and that really helped... she explained to them how remorseful I was and how much it was affecting me. It helped the people at court to understand my situation better.'*

WPWSA participant

The evaluation found the programmes are **improving people's engagement and experiences of other services**. They are improving their perceptions of support services, which might make them more likely to seek the support they need. They are also improving participant's awareness of and access to other services and providing ongoing practical and emotional support to engage with them.

*'It's changed my outlook on some services. Now, if I go to another service, I don't think it'll be a waste of time... I think something could come of this.'*

18-25 EIS client



The evaluation found this improved engagement is due to...

- **Caseworkers' knowledge of the criminal justice system** which enables them to support and guide clients.
- **Caseworkers attending court with clients and advocating** for them as part of the WPWSA and giving clients practical and emotional support to complete probation orders.
- **Caseworkers acting as a point of contact to help clients access and navigate multiple services and avoid being retraumatised.** They signpost, make referrals, follow up, and advocate for clients to receive appropriate support.
- **The programmes support people to maintain engagement with other services** helping them communicate with the services, accompanying them to appointments, and explaining the processes and pathways.

**The evaluation found emerging evidence that some parts of the systems that identify and support women and young people involved with the criminal justice system are becoming more effective, and that the programmes are contributing to these improvements.** For example, some aspects of the way organisations work together are improving and there is a move towards support that is tailored to individuals and that takes account of their strengths, needs and circumstances. There is also evidence of some positive changes in culture and practice within the police, meaning that there is more understanding of the need to support people who offend to address issues which might contribute to their offending.



The evaluation found systems are starting to change due to...

- **A greater emphasis on holistic, person-centred support, and improved multi-agency working** in the area
- **Changes in culture and practice**, including increased awareness of the needs of people who offend and the benefits of diversion and support, and increased use of alternatives to prosecution.

## Future development

People involved in the criminal justice system and support services who took part in the evaluation are interested in gathering more evidence about the impact of these kinds of programmes. In particular, they are looking into ways of understanding whether and how much they help people to avoid offending or involvement in the criminal justice system.

They also plan to build on the learning from delivering these programmes. For example, it may be beneficial to find ways to offer similar support to other groups of people, to make the support even more effective or to promote further system improvements.