

# Alternatives to Custody

## Women's Centres and the view from Northern Ireland

Centre for Crime and Justice Studies, London 10.06.15



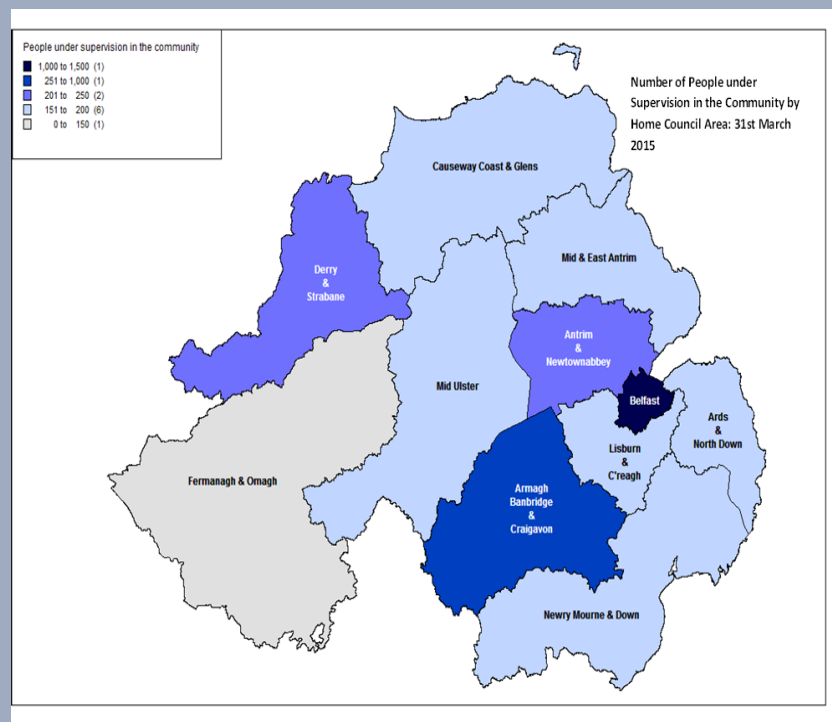
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[#prisonalternatives](https://twitter.com/NicolaCarr)

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# Overview

- \* Context of Probation and Community Sanctions in Northern Ireland
- \* Development of provision for women
- \* Current issues and challenges



- \* Probation Board for Northern Ireland (NDPB)
- \* Devolution of Policing and Justice Powers (2010)
- \* Different legislative framework
- \* Probation Officers – social work trained

# Community Sanctions

- \* Growth in prison population (2009-2013 - +28%)
  - \* Short custodial sentences rise
  - \* Crown court cases rise
  - \* Custody/Probation sentences
  - \* Recalls
- \* Rise in numbers subject to community supervision



# Paradox of Probation?

Supervision in the community an alternative and reduces the prison population

**or**

Expanding community supervision widens net and (potentially) increases prison population

Paradox of Probation (Phelps, 2013)

‘Rather, probation serves both capacities, acting as an alternative and as a net-widener, to varying degrees across time and place.’ (Phelps, 2013:51)

# Net-widener or penal reduction?

\* Two central outcomes that determine the probation-prison link:

1. Whether probation **diverts** people away from prison **or draws** cases under greater supervision;
2. Probation as an **opportunity for rehabilitation** that reduces future incarceration or as a pathway to prison.

1. Sentencing practices and processes;
2. Effectiveness and quality of probation supervision and services
3. Policies and procedures regarding violations and breaches

Phelps (2013)

**COST ACTION IS1106 Offender Supervision in Europe**

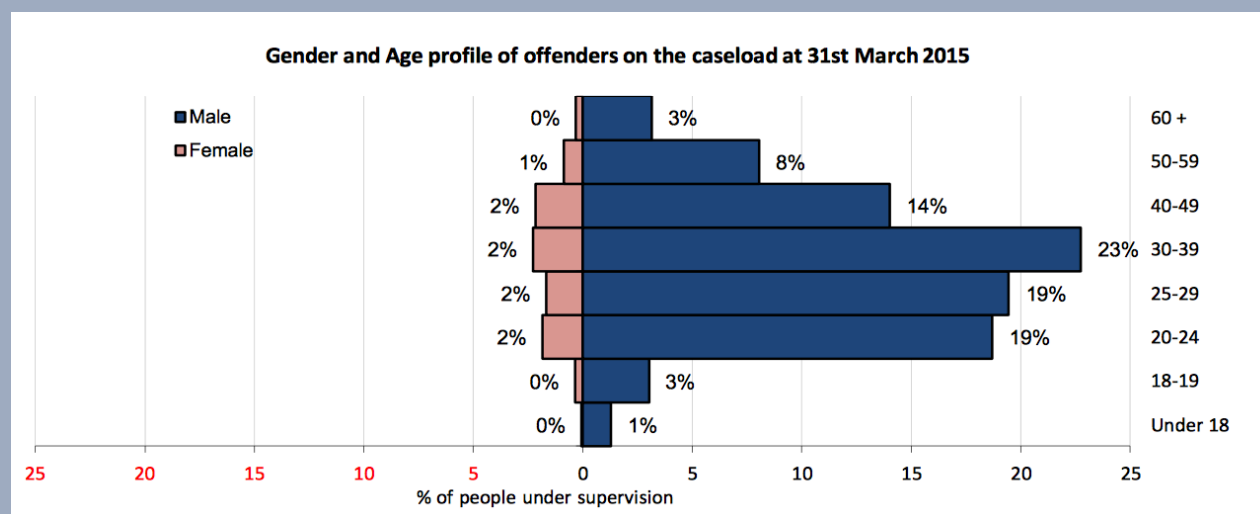
**Table 1: Number of People on the caseload at Point in Time by sentence type\*: 31st March 2010 – 31st March 2015**

Number of People*	31 Mar 2010	31 Mar 2011	31 Mar 2012	31 Mar 2013	31 Mar 2014	31 Mar 2015	% change
							31 Mar 2015 on 31 Mar 2014
All Community Sentences	2,495	2,690	2,821	2,616	2,525	2,248	-11%
Pre-release	645	751	939	1,085	1,225	1,119	-9%
All post-release supervision	722	649	648	765	925	1,048	+13%
All pre and post-release supervision	1,363	1,392	1,581	1,836	2,141	2,156	+1%
Non Statutory supervision	170	182	99	80	33	28	-
<b>All PBNI supervision</b>	<b>3,983</b>	<b>4,211</b>	<b>4,441</b>	<b>4,468</b>	<b>4,652</b>	<b>4,395</b>	<b>-6%</b>

## Key Figures:

Women 10% of caseload

Highest proportionate representation of women in 40-49 age group



# Policy and practice context

## Corston Report (2007)

- \* Experiences of violence and victimisation
- \* Histories of abuse
- \* Higher prevalence of mental health need, drug use etc.
- \* More likely to be primary carers

## NI Strategy for Women Offenders (2010)

- \* Acquisitive crime – fines

**But** fine default result in prison

- \* Higher rates of self-harm in prison

# Women in Prison in Northern Ireland

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1 October 2013 Last updated at 13:09

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## Belfast's Hydebank Wood prisons 'not good enough'

Performance at two of Northern Ireland's prisons is not good enough, inspectors have said.

They have made more than 150 recommendations for improvements at the women's prison and young offenders centre at Hydebank Wood in Belfast.

The inspectors said they had "significant concerns" that both prisons were in a "downward spiral".

About 180 young men are held at Hydebank, NI's main young offenders centre.

About 70 women are in a separate facility on the same site.

Inspectors visited in February this year and assessed performance in the areas of safety, respect, purposeful activity and resettlement.

"It is the fourth time we have inspected Hydebank Wood. In 2005, at the first inspection, I was raising the same issues," Brendan McGuigan of Criminal Justice Inspection said.

The greatest cause for concern surrounds the safety of prisoners, Mr McGuigan said.

"We already know many people in the system have mental health issues and they are very vulnerable. They need to be given a regime that supports their rehabilitation," he said.

"It is the fourth time we have inspected Hydebank Wood in 2005. At the first inspection, I was raising the same issues."

### Culture change

Mr McGuigan said that changing the culture of the prisons was a significant challenge.

"There has been significant under-investment in the development of people to take over the Northern Ireland prison service. We need people who know what success looks like."

He said change was vital. "The current regime is not making them (prisoners) better. It is not good enough. That is not what we want as a society."

Hydebank Wood houses a women's prison and young offenders centre

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Brendan McGuigan said there is a lack of 'purposeful activity' at Hydebank Wood

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14 November 2013

# thedetail

## Nine years on, Hydebank Wood is deemed a failure for women

01 OCTOBER 2013



Female prisoners moved to Hydebank Wood from Maghaberry in 2004

**By Niall McCracken**

THERE are "significant concerns" about the level of care provided to Northern Ireland's most vulnerable prisoner populations – with calls for women to be moved yet again to a suitable secure facility.

A new report by the Criminal Justice Inspectorate (CJI) has questioned the ability of Hydebank Wood Young Offenders' Centre (YOC) and Ash House, Northern Ireland's women's prison, to deliver positive outcomes for inmates within their care.

And, nine years after women were moved from Maghaberry Prison because of its unsuitability, the inspectors have concluded that the replacement jail in Hydebank Wood (HbW) has failed to come up to scratch – and is having a "significant and intractable" effect on the outcomes for female inmates.

The CJI report also raised further concerns about the frequency of prisoner self-harm.

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### Investigation

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- > Use of solitary "not cavalier": new prisons director
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# Women's Offending Behaviour in Northern Ireland: A Strategy To Manage Women Offenders and Those Vulnerable to Offending Behaviour 2010-2013

- \* **Strategic Strand 1** : Providing Alternatives to Prosecution and Custody
- \* **Strategic Strand 2** : Reduce Re-Offending
- \* **Strategic Strand 3** : INSPIRE Women's Project: Gender-Specific Community Supervision and Interventions
- \* **Strategic Strand 4** : Developing a Gender Specific Approach to the Management of Women in Custody.



## WOMEN'S OFFENDING BEHAVIOUR IN NORTHERN IRELAND:

A STRATEGY TO MANAGE WOMEN OFFENDERS AND  
THOSE VULNERABLE TO OFFENDING BEHAVIOUR  
2010-2013

OCTOBER 2010

NORTHERN IRELAND  
PRISON SERVICE



# INSPIRE Project

- \* Established in 2008
- \* Women centred approach
- \* Assessments for court
- \* Statutory orders



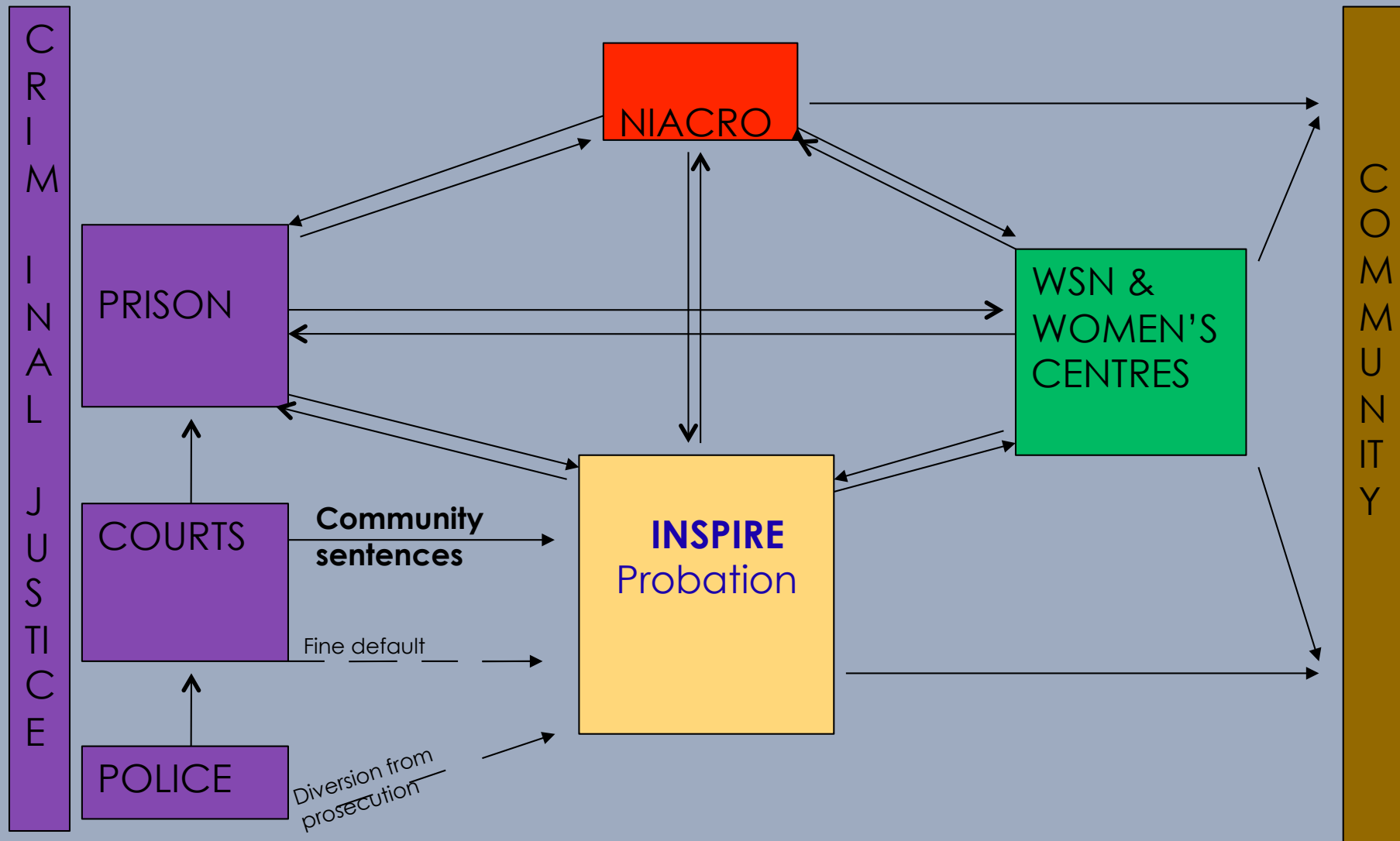
# INSPIRE Model

- \* Registered as a day-care provider
- \* Links with Sure Start



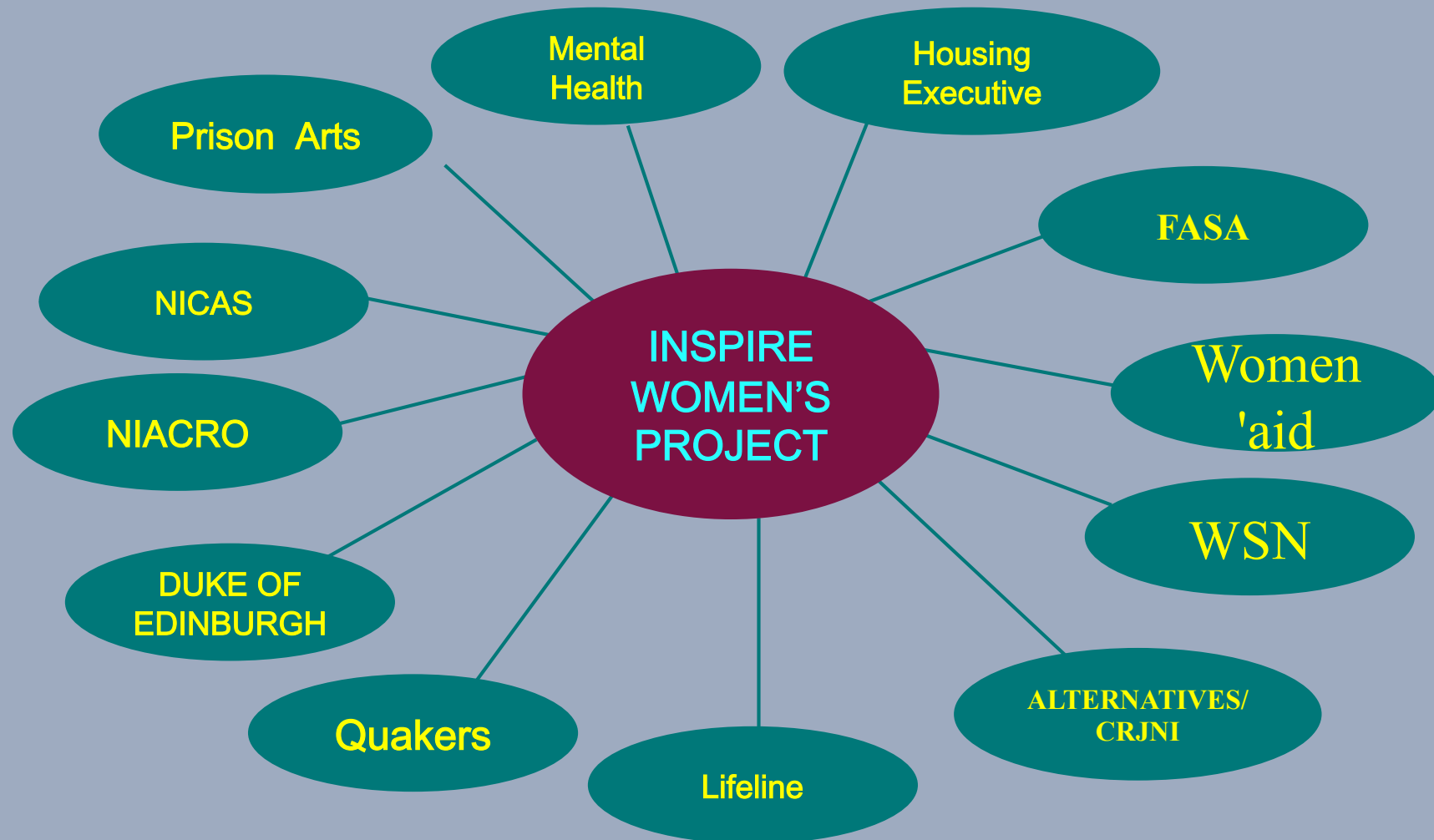


# INSPIRE Model



Source: Jean O'Neill – Manager INSPIRE

# Inspire Women's Project



Source: Jean O'Neill – Manager INSPIRE

# Evaluation of Project

Quality of supervision – rated positively by women

Safe space

Practical supports

Non-judgemental

Good compliance

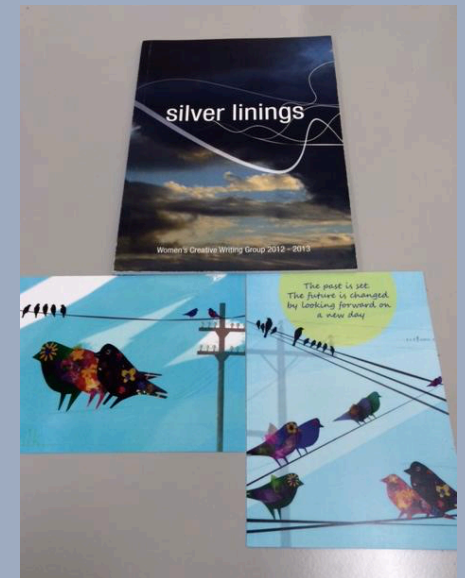
Inspire was viewed by key stakeholders as a unique and much needed service that has been highly effective in the short time it has been running. The staff team are highly regarded by both women offenders and stakeholders alike. Central to the Project's success has been its women-centred approach which involves women in identifying their own needs and objectives and the wide and varied links with community based organisations, particularly the Northern Ireland Women's Centres. Such links with support in the community have meant that Inspire can provide a 'joined up', rapid and cost effective response to a wide range of women offender's

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Easton & Matthews (2011)

# Evaluation recommendations

- \* Establishing stronger links with agencies (police, housing, mental health)
- \* Developing robust monitoring and evaluation outcomes
- \* Widening scope – courts, geographic



Easton & Matthews (2011)

Resources and risk  
orthodoxy

Women fall off the  
agenda?

Jean O'Neill:

Griffins Society Fellowship  
exploring women's  
transition from custody to  
the community.



# References

- \* Easton, H. & Matthews, R. (2011) *Evaluation of the INSPIRE Women's Project*. Belfast: DoJ
- \* Northern Ireland Prison Service (2005) *The Re-integration Needs of Women Prisoners in Northern Ireland*, Belfast: NIPS.
- \* Northern Ireland Office (2009) *Draft Strategy for the Management of Women Offenders in Northern Ireland: A Consultation*, Belfast: NIO
- \* O'Neill, J. (2011) 'The Inspire Women's Project: Managing women offenders within the community.' *Irish Probation Journal*, 1: 93-108

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- \* Scraton, P. and Moore, L. (2005) *The Hurt Inside: The Imprisonment of Women and Girls in Northern Ireland*, Belfast: Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission.
- \* Scraton, P. and Moore, L. (2007) *The Prison Within: The Imprisonment of Women at Hydebank Wood 2004-06*, Belfast: Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission.
- \* PBNI Caseload Statistics 2014/15. Available at:  
[http://www.pbni.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Caseload-Statistics-Report-2014\\_15\\_Internet-15.05.15.pdf](http://www.pbni.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Caseload-Statistics-Report-2014_15_Internet-15.05.15.pdf)