

# The Women's Risk Needs Assessment (WRNA): An Evidence and Practice Briefing

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## Introduction

Women's pathways into offending are distinct from men's, shaped by their specific needs and experiences. Effective support and interventions therefore require tailored responses, starting with an accurate assessment of those needs and experiences. Traditional criminal justice assessment tools, such as the Offender Assessment System (OASys), have been primarily developed for and validated with male cohorts. Research has found that they often misclassify women's needs as risks, leading to women being assessed as higher (or lower) risk levels than warranted,<sup>1</sup> as well as being unable to capture the interconnected nature of their needs. Without gender-specific data, statutory agencies and community services lack an accurate picture of women's risks and needs and can therefore struggle to design effective interventions. Where effective provision exists, a lack of robust baseline and outcome data can make it challenging to demonstrate value.

The Women's Risk Needs Assessment (WRNA) was developed to fill this gap. It is a gender-responsive, trauma-informed assessment tool that provides a comprehensive evaluation of women's risks, needs, and strengths across 19 scales, while also serving as a case management resource. By generating standardised, gender-specific data, the WRNA enables the development of tailored support plans. It also evidences outcomes beyond reoffending, strengthening the case for wider systemic change in the way we address the needs of justice-involved women.

This briefing explores the evidence base and offers practical guidance to support practitioners interested in the WRNA's use and its role in identifying women's risks, needs and strengths. Informed by a literature review and insights from practitioners and academics, it provides:

- An overview of the policy context and need for gender-responsive approaches.
- A summary of the limitations of current criminal justice assessment tools.
- An outline of the evidence behind the WRNA, including strengths and limitations.
- Practical approaches for implementing the WRNA.
- Considerations for wider use of the WRNA.

By doing so, this briefing aims to support practitioners, policymakers and commissioners in understanding the role the WRNA can play in building a gender-responsive justice system that effectively assesses risk and addresses women's needs.

## Part 1: Evidence for the WRNA

This section outlines the policy context and evidential base for the WRNA.

### Background

#### Policy context

Although the distinct drivers of women's offending were already documented in prior UK research and policy work, the Corston Report (2007) brought these issues to the forefront, emphasising the strong links between women's offending and factors such as trauma, domestic abuse, mental health issues, substance use, and socio-economic disadvantage.<sup>2</sup> Corston emphasised the ineffectiveness of custody for many women who offend and proposed gender-responsive, community-based alternatives. The report called for the expansion of women's centres to deliver holistic support and interventions that address a range of women's needs.

The Concordat on Women in or at risk of contact with the Criminal Justice System (2021) promoted the development of Whole System Approaches (WSA) to provide holistic support and reduce reoffending.<sup>3</sup> WSA begins with an assessment of women's needs at their first contact with the justice system, enabling interventions to be targeted appropriately. The government's Female Offender Strategy (2018) and subsequent policy statements have reiterated commitments to gender-responsive and trauma-informed practice.<sup>4</sup> However, independent reviews and sector reports have highlighted that progress remains uneven.<sup>5</sup> Funding for women's community services has been constrained over many years, creating instability and leaving many organisations dependent on short-term or generic criminal-justice funding streams that are not tailored to women's needs. In the absence of a standardised national framework for assessing women, services face ongoing challenges in tailoring interventions and in consistently measuring outcomes.<sup>6</sup>

The creation of the Women's Justice Board in 2024 shows a renewed political will to improve outcomes for women. The recent Independent Sentencing Review (2025) advocated for more sustainable and long-term funding for women's centres to enable them to play a greater role in the monitoring and rehabilitation of women on community orders, helping to ease pressures on the Probation Service.<sup>7</sup> While there is general agreement on the need for gender-responsive interventions, there are ongoing calls for improved data collection to better understand women's experiences and inform the delivery of effective practice.<sup>8</sup>

#### Why women who offend need gender-responsive practice

Women's offending patterns differ markedly from men's. They commit far fewer, and generally less serious offences<sup>9</sup> and are typically recognised as posing minimal risk to public safety.<sup>10</sup> Their involvement in crime is more often rooted in personal circumstances and structural disadvantage than in an intent to cause serious harm.<sup>11</sup> Pathways into offending typically fall within three overlapping domains: mental health (including trauma and distress), interpersonal factors (such as substance use and coercive relationships), and socio-economic pressures (including poverty, homelessness and marginalisation).<sup>12</sup> Research highlights how these factors interact with and compound with one another to a greater extent for women than for men.<sup>13</sup> Evidence also shows that women experience trauma at higher rates than their male counterparts,<sup>14</sup> and that women charged with offences have themselves been victims of serious crime.<sup>15</sup> For example, a recent Centre for Women's Justice report highlights systemic failings that lead to victims of coercive control being punished rather than protected.<sup>16</sup>

Because the needs of justice-involved women are multidimensional and interconnected, effective responses must be holistic.<sup>17</sup> Yet despite broad recognition of these overlapping needs, many women continue to be excluded from services for being "too complex" or "too risky".<sup>18</sup> Support is frequently delivered in isolation - addressing mental health, substance use, or housing separately - without accounting for the way these issues reinforce one another.<sup>19</sup> This fragmented approach leaves core drivers of offending unresolved and perpetuates cycles of reoffending.<sup>20</sup>

Women are also less likely to reoffend than men,<sup>21</sup> and evidence consistently shows that gender-responsive approaches reduce recidivism more effectively than generic approaches.<sup>22</sup> A Justice Data

Lab evaluation of the Together Women service, for example, found a proven reoffending rate of 26% among supported women compared with 35% of women in a matched control group.<sup>23</sup> Interventions are particularly effective when they address multiple needs simultaneously<sup>24</sup> and address “upstream” factors such as trauma and mental health.<sup>25</sup> Achieving this requires a robust, standardised assessment process that can consistently recognise the distinct experiences and risks faced by women and ensure that interventions are tailored accordingly.<sup>26</sup>

### Limitations of current assessment tools

Most assessment tools used in the criminal justice system were originally developed for men,<sup>27</sup> reflecting the historical dominance of male populations in correctional research. In England and Wales, the Offender Assessment System (OASys) is a standardised framework used by His Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service to assess the risks and needs of people on probation or in custody. OASys draws on the Risk–Need–Responsivity (RNR) model and the Level of Service Inventory–Revised (LSI-R), both of which were designed and validated primarily for male cohorts in North America during the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>28</sup> Although these frameworks are well established for predicting recidivism, evidence of their accuracy for women is limited.<sup>29</sup> Early studies found that women typically present higher levels of need in areas such as relationships and emotional wellbeing than men,<sup>30</sup> while a later evaluation reported that these sections of OASys were often completed inconsistently, undermining the reliability of risk scores.<sup>31</sup> Subsequent efforts have introduced gender-responsive adaptations, but these remain modifications of tools whose conceptual foundations were male-oriented.

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has announced plans to replace OASys with a new tool - Assessing Risks Needs and Strengths (ARNS) - designed to enhance assessment quality and reduce completion time through a collaborative, strengths-based approach.<sup>32</sup> However, without explicit attention to gender-specific factors, ARNS risks replicating the limitations of previous gender-neutral instruments, which have struggled to accurately capture women’s distinct risks and needs.<sup>33</sup>

## Development and use of the WRNA

### Development and validation

The WRNA was developed in the US by the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) in collaboration with Dr Patricia Van Voorhis to address the limitations of traditional assessment tools.<sup>34</sup> Multiple validation studies have confirmed the WRNA’s effectiveness across the US, and in 2020 it was endorsed by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.<sup>35</sup> The tool’s current iteration, Version 7, was developed by Dr Emily Salisbury at the University of Utah and is widely used across various correctional agencies in the US. The WRNA has also been validated in the Czech Republic,<sup>36</sup> with other countries, including Switzerland, Singapore and Namibia, exploring options for implementation.

In the UK, the University of Birmingham’s [Women, Crime and Justice Research Group](#) reviewed international assessment tools and identified the WRNA as the most comprehensive, gender-responsive assessment specifically designed for women involved in the criminal justice system.<sup>37</sup> The team validated the WRNA with more than 500 women across seven UK sites in a study funded by the JABBS Foundation for Women and Girls,<sup>38</sup> confirming the tool’s reliability in predicting both the likelihood and frequency of reoffending among women in England and Wales.<sup>39</sup> Services and agencies that wish to implement the WRNA must obtain a licence through the University of Birmingham, which holds the UK rights.

### How the WRNA differs from earlier assessment tools

While rooted in criminogenic risk assessment models, the WRNA differs from traditional assessment tools by incorporating behavioural and social learning theories alongside an understanding of how social power dynamics affect women.<sup>40</sup> Going beyond the main criminogenic factors linked to reoffending, the tool assesses the underlying needs that drive women’s offending, such as abusive relationships, trauma, and parental stress, which are often limited or missing in traditional tools.<sup>41</sup> The tool uses trauma-informed interviewing and assesses both static and dynamic risk factors, as well as women’s protective factors. It produces risk scores relating to the likelihood of reoffending, and scale scores that prioritise needs and protective strengths across categories such as mental health, employment, finances, education, family support and self-efficacy. Women’s risk is categorised as Low, Moderate, Medium or High, providing a standardised framework for identifying

proportionate levels of interventions.<sup>42</sup> The intensity and frequency of interventions should be proportionate to women's assessed level of risk.<sup>43</sup> However, emerging evidence suggests that alignment with women's complex needs may, in some cases, be more impactful – for instance shorter interventions can support stabilisation, whereas longer ones are better placed to achieve lasting change.<sup>44</sup> Support plans are co-produced with women to ensure interventions reflect their priority needs. While the WRNA's primary role is to predict risk and rates of reoffending, it also serves as a case management tool.<sup>45</sup>

Women undergo a WRNA review at key stages, such as when circumstances change, at intervention mid-points, and prior to exit, to track progress and adjust intervention plans as needed. This dynamic approach to assessment generates data on outcomes that extend beyond reoffending, providing a richer picture of change and enabling continuous monitoring of intervention effectiveness. By strengthening the collection of gender-specific data, the tool also aims to support evidence-based policy reform and the development of more effective responses to women's offending.

### Collaboration between the Probation Service and women's centres

International evidence shows that gender-responsive strategies that address areas such as trauma and relationships can improve probation outcomes by reducing reoffending and freeing time for probation officers to focus on statutory requirements, such as supervision and rehabilitation.<sup>46</sup> While the WRNA is not a standalone solution, it has been validated as a tool to help reduce reoffending<sup>47</sup> and has the potential to offer improved outcomes for probation and the women they work with when combined with gender-responsive supervision. However, given the length and the time required to use WRNA effectively, it may place further burden on an already stretched Probation Service. While probation officers are skilled at assessing and managing risk and rehabilitation, they currently operate within a complex and challenging environment with large caseloads. The Independent Sentencing Review recommends greater use of third-sector services to reduce probation workloads.<sup>48</sup> Collaborating with women's centres through embedding the WRNA could help ease some of the pressures on probation. The outcomes data gathered through these collaborations will strengthen the evidence base, enabling a full assessment of how the WRNA assessment achieves the intended impact on the probation outcomes outlined above.

### Current use of the WRNA across England and Wales

Currently, use of the WRNA in England and Wales is limited to women's centres involved in the [Effective Women's Centres \(EWC\) Partnership](#) (EWC).<sup>49</sup> This partnership, funded by the JABBS Foundation for Women and Girls, consists of seven women's centres and the University of Birmingham. As of August 2025, the partnership received additional matched funding from the Henry Smith Foundation to expand the partnership to include additional women's centres and increase uptake of the WRNA.<sup>50</sup>

EWC partners are using the WRNA with justice-involved women referred through Commissioned Rehabilitative Services (CRS), Mentoring and Advocacy Services (MAS) and Liaison and Diversion contracts. The tool is used to inform case planning and prioritise intervention areas for women's Rehabilitation Activity Requirement (RAR) days, undertaken as part of a community sentence. Together Women, a women's centre provider across the North of England, also uses a scaled-down version of the tool with women in custody, which only includes questions relating to pre-release needs. Birmingham's Anawim and Black Country's Women's Aid use the WRNA with women as part of the pre-sentence report (PSR) process, alongside probation, in Birmingham's Intensive Supervision Court (ISC). Using the WRNA as part of PSRs provides the judge with a fuller picture of women's lives and the factors that led to the offence, which can be particularly helpful in evidencing issues such as coercive control.

### Strengths of the WRNA

- **Enabling holistic, gender-responsive and person-centred practice:** Delivered effectively, WRNA offers a safe, conversational, trauma-informed process. Practitioners we spoke with indicated that women report feeling heard, respected, and supported, often disclosing trauma they had never shared before. They explain that the process fosters empowerment and encourages collaboration in setting priorities to support positive change.

- **Identifying effective interventions for reducing reoffending:** Evidence shows that gender-responsive interventions reduce women's reoffending by up to 42% more than generic approaches.<sup>51</sup> A validated tool like the WRNA provides practitioners with detailed, reliable information to align the intensity and focus of interventions with women's needs.<sup>52</sup> For service managers and commissioners, it offers robust data to support the design of holistic, gender-responsive interventions<sup>53</sup> and to refine practice by confirming what works, revealing gaps, and identifying areas for improvement.<sup>54</sup> By monitoring changes in risk scores and other key measures, the WRNA highlights which interventions are most effective, strengthening practice and professional decision-making across the justice system.<sup>55</sup>
- **Facilitating case management:** While practitioners we spoke with explained how the WRNA is longer and takes more time to complete compared to other assessment tools, it can help simplify casework by improving processes. The standardised approach of the WRNA ensures that nothing is missed and that identified needs link directly to appropriate interventions. It also creates a clear starting point against which women's progress can be tracked, helping caseworkers see improvements, any new issues that may have been disclosed, and where strengths are developing, making it easier to evidence impact and adjust support plans as needed. The assessment provides the foundation for tailored case plans that prioritise support and avoids over-intervention. More accurate categories of risk can enable managers to balance caseloads more effectively, potentially reducing staff burnout.
- **Standardising data collection:** The WRNA provides women's centres and other services with a reliable evidence base that can demonstrate the value of their work and help secure funding. Data from the WRNA has revealed the high prevalence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among justice-involved women, which some services have used to obtain funding for trauma stabilisation programmes, counselling and therapeutic provision. Many of the scales used in the tool align with measures used by non-criminal justice partners, such as health and treatment providers. This supports WSA, allowing caseworkers to make a compelling case for referrals to statutory agencies, potentially enabling quicker access for women.
- **Demonstrating the relationship between violence against women and girls, and women's offending:** By evidencing the prevalence of violence and abuse in the lives of criminal justice-involved women, the WRNA can help shift conversations away from the binary perspective of victim/offender.<sup>56</sup> Violence and abuse are shown to be clear and pivotal drivers of criminal justice involvement by their proven ability to increase the severity and complexity of a variety of other needs that together drive involvement with the criminal justice system.<sup>57</sup> By providing robust evidence on the gendered harm that many women who offend have experienced, the WRNA offers opportunities to influence policy and strengthens the case for WSA across health, housing, education, employment and welfare services. Practitioner insights stress the value of a comprehensive assessment to identify and address women's needs early, enabling prevention and diversion. The WRNA supports this by recognising trauma and abuse not as direct causes of crime, but as critical context shaping criminogenic needs, thereby underscoring the importance of addressing women's upstream needs.<sup>58</sup>

### Challenges for effective use of the WRNA

- **Effective use requires resources and capacity:** The WRNA is a promising tool, but it is not a standalone solution to wider sector issues of underfunding, workforce pressures and systemic barriers.<sup>59</sup> Caseworkers require training across trauma-responsiveness, cultural sensitivity, and managing vicarious trauma to conduct the WRNA safely and effectively. Provision of training often varies across statutory agencies, and while larger women's services are generally better equipped to provide this training, smaller organisations may struggle. The efficacy of a comprehensive assessment is limited without the resources and capacity to offer subsequent interventions for identified needs. Some women will have little or no access to a women's centre in their area.
- **Strong multi-agency collaboration can be difficult to achieve:** Effective delivery of the WRNA depends on partnerships that draw on the combined expertise of women's centres and probation services. Together these agencies offer complementary skills in trauma- and gender-responsive practice, risk assessment, and case management, enabling a more integrated and holistic response than any one organisation could achieve alone. However, in the current climate of constrained funding and high service demand, sustaining the level of coordination and resourcing required for such collaboration remains a significant challenge.

- **Potential to retraumatise if not delivered appropriately:** While the WRNA follows a trauma-informed structure, trauma-responsiveness depends on the skills of the assessor. Staff require ongoing training to use WRNA effectively.<sup>60</sup> Without a trauma-responsive approach or safe and supportive settings, sensitive questions in the WRNA could retraumatise women rather than help them.
- **Risk of missing opportunities for earlier, preventive intervention:** While unaddressed needs such as trauma increase the likelihood of reoffending,<sup>61</sup> some academics caution that framing these broader needs of women as “criminogenic” makes trauma a criminal justice responsibility.<sup>62</sup> In practice, this risks overlooking the lack of adequate provision available to women before they become involved in the justice system<sup>63</sup> - a challenge that is fundamentally a public health and social welfare issue.
- **Constraints of the UK validation study:** As with any study, the validation of the WRNA has limitations. Most notably, the WRNA has not yet been specifically validated across race, ability, sexual orientation, or with gender-diverse people.<sup>64</sup> Internationally, the WRNA has shown predictive validity across diverse populations, but further work is needed to adapt or refine scales for marginalised groups and cultural contexts. The study tracked reoffending for only 12 months post-assessment.<sup>65</sup> While the evidence does indicate that this initial year is the key period for women’s reoffending,<sup>66</sup> validation over longer periods will be crucial to further verifying accuracy.

## Part 2: Practice guidance – implementing the WRNA

This section provides step-by-step practice guidance for organisations seeking to adopt the Women’s Risk Needs Assessment (WRNA), drawn from practitioner insights and implementation evidence.

### Preparing for implementation

For organisations thinking about adopting the WRNA, there are several factors to consider:

#### Resources and organisational commitment

There needs to be sufficient resources to provide (or a commitment to develop) gender- and trauma-responsive support and interventions that address the risks and needs identified through the assessment process. Delivering meaningful change also requires broader organisational commitment to gender-responsive practice, including (but not limited to) offering same-gender spaces and same-gender caseworkers.

#### Leadership buy-in

Successful embedding of the WRNA requires strong leadership buy-in to support adjustments to existing assessment processes and drive any necessary policy changes. Early engagement with senior managers is critical to help shift organisational culture and prioritise the WRNA as a core assessment rather than an optional add-on.

### Setting up the WRNA

Before delivery can begin, services need to focus on licensing, training, and change management:

#### Licensing and training

Organisations must sign the licence agreement and complete the certified WRNA Risk Assessment and Case Management training,<sup>67</sup> delivered by the University of Birmingham. The training is comprehensive, covering both theory and practice, with modules that include gender-responsive practice, trauma-informed interviewing, and case planning skills.

#### Embedding the tool

Practitioners emphasise that it takes time to embed the WRNA into an organisation, requiring effective change management. Clear communication of priorities, appointing WRNA “Champions” to provide shadowing opportunities, and offering service-user feedback to staff can help build momentum and confidence.

### Managing workforce pressures

High staff turnover can create ongoing training needs. Including WRNA training in staff induction, staggering training for existing staff, and appointing non-case-holding “Master Trainers” can help sustain capacity and reduce disruption.

## Joint working arrangements between probation and women’s centres

### Intensive Supervision Courts (ISCs)

New women’s ISCs should consider embedding the WRNA as part of their core processes, building on the co-location which is already key to the model. In Birmingham’s ISC, women’s centre caseworkers from Anawim or Black Country Women’s Aid and probation officers complete the WRNA alongside the PSR process.

### Standard court processes

Elsewhere, women’s services can complete the WRNA and share relevant results with probation to inform CRS referrals under agreed data-sharing arrangements. Any outstanding points from the OASys, such as risk of harm, could be assessed through additional questions, rather than a full second assessment. Practitioners emphasised the importance of securing the support of the CRS Contract Manager in negotiating working arrangements. Practical steps include conducting WRNAs before Rehabilitation Activity Requirement (RAR) days begin. This approach could allow probation more time to focus on risk of harm, while also avoiding multiple assessments for women.<sup>68</sup>

### Sharing outcomes and case studies

Effective collaboration relies on local arrangements, but practitioner insights indicate that sharing outcome evidence and positive case studies from the WRNA can help demonstrate its value and can encourage joint working. Creating quick-reference guides that link WRNA findings to probation outcomes and terminology can further strengthen buy-in.

## Delivering the WRNA in practice

### Timing and coordination

The WRNA should be completed when a woman first comes into contact with the criminal justice system, providing a baseline that can be tracked throughout her journey. With consent, the WRNA data can be shared with relevant agencies to enable coordinated support across probation, health, housing, social services and women’s services.

### Creating a safe environment

The assessment is most effective in environments where women feel safe, heard and respected.<sup>69</sup> Explaining the purpose of the tool in advance, listening to concerns and applying principles of transparency, authenticity, empathy and non-judgemental practice encourages disclosure.

### Addressing hesitancy and sensitive questions

Caseworker hesitancy around sensitive topics can be reduced by reassuring staff that clinical expertise is not required and that understanding women’s needs is key to effective support. Establishing peer-support networks across services, providing additional resources on trauma-responsive practice, and further testing the WRNA with racially minoritised women and those with learning disabilities can build confidence in inclusive delivery.

### Supporting women’s engagement

Some women may be reluctant to take part in the assessment. Tailoring delivery - such as splitting the assessment over multiple appointments, using visual aids or wellbeing packs - can make participation more accessible. Introductory scripts and co-produced leaflets that explain the WRNA’s purpose, confidentiality and benefits (including in commonly spoken languages) can also reduce anxiety. Where appropriate, using laptops or tablets can make assessments more conversational, though paper copies may still be needed in rural areas with poor connectivity.

## Overcoming operational barriers

### Digital integration

Integrating WRNA data into existing case management systems can be challenging. Services have addressed this by using data-analysis platforms (such as Microsoft Power BI) to create dashboards and by recruiting data analysts or managers to simplify data recording and make information accessible for both frontline staff and senior managers.

### Building staff confidence and consistency

To embed the WRNA as a core assessment, services have provided clear context to caseworkers, positioning the tool as part of wider systems change and emphasising its evidence base and benefits. They have shared service-user feedback to highlight impact, tracked WRNA completions with regular reviews, and followed up with individual caseworkers as needed.

### Peer support and specialist resources

Establishing cross-service peer-support networks and developing additional resources -particularly on trauma-responsive practice and sensitive questioning - has helped caseworkers build confidence. Smaller services may find developing peer-support networks with larger services useful.

### Further validation with intersectionality

The EWC partnership is driving momentum to embed the WRNA and strengthen the evidence for its effectiveness across the justice system of England and Wales. This momentum should extend to validating the tool with racially minoritised women and with women who have learning disabilities or neurodiverse needs, ensuring greater inclusivity, and giving staff confidence in the WRNA's suitability across diverse and intersecting groups. The additional funding granted to the EWC Partnership offers an opportunity to involve by-and-for services and those specialising in supporting specific groups of women.

### Rural service delivery

For services operating in rural areas without a physical hub, community venues can provide accessible in-person settings. Where this is not feasible, exploring remote assessment options and drawing on the WRNA data to evidence unmet needs can strengthen funding bids and support service expansion.

## Summary of key considerations for use of the WRNA

Drawing on the evidence and insights outlined above, the following section summarises key considerations for effective implementation and scaling of the WRNA.

### For women's caseworkers

- Deliver the WRNA in environments that women feel are **safe, gender-responsive and trauma-informed**.
- **Tailor interventions** to risk and need; support should be proportionate to avoid over-intervention for low-risk women.
- **Co-produce support plans** and build on women's strengths (such as parenting or support networks) to increase self-efficacy and reduce reoffending risk.
- Use the WRNA as a **reflective tool**: review outcomes with women and adapt support as needs change through a process of dynamic assessment.

### For women's centres working with probation

- **Engage CRS contract managers** early and demonstrate how WRNA findings align with probation outcomes.
- **Use WRNA results** to inform case planning and reports, reducing duplicate assessments.
- Provide **practical reference guides** linking WRNA findings to probation terminology and outcomes.

## Ensuring appropriate infrastructure

- Build **practitioner skills, confidence, and capacity** through ongoing training in trauma-responsiveness and cultural sensitivity.
- **Validate** the WRNA with racially minoritised women and women with learning disabilities or neurodiverse needs to confirm inclusivity.
- Ensure services can **respond to identified needs** with holistic and gender-responsive support (including vicarious trauma support for staff).
- With consent, **share summarised WRNA** results with partners outside the justice system (e.g. housing, health, social care) to improve coordination and cross-sector learning.
- **Use aggregated WRNA data** to evidence trauma and socio-economic disadvantage, supporting policy change and diversified funding for specialist women's community services.

## Conclusion

The Women's Risk Needs Assessment (WRNA) is not a quick fix, but it represents one step towards a justice system that better responds to women's lived experiences. Evidence shows that gender-responsive interventions are significantly more effective at reducing reoffending than generic ones, and a gender-specific assessment plays an important role in achieving this. The impact of the WRNA depends on how and where it is delivered. It is most effective when women can access holistic, trauma- and gender-responsive support. Wider use will require sustainable funding for women's community services, commitment from senior leaders and sector-level changes. Further validation of the WRNA with wider cohorts, alongside refinement of scales, would further strengthen the tool's credibility.

Beyond reducing reoffending, the WRNA supports the delivery of gender-responsive, trauma-informed practice and it can provide evidence to inform better policy and commissioning decisions. With sustained investment and cultural adaptations, the WRNA has the potential to support more consistent, coordinated and proportionate responses to women in the criminal justice system.

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### About the Centre for Justice Innovation:

The Centre for Justice Innovation seek to build a justice system which all of its citizens believe is fair and effective. We champion practice innovation and evidence-led policy reform in the UK's justice systems. We are a registered UK charity.

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