

**Questions from Professor Adrian James – submitted to the Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) – 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2020 & Responses received 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

**Question**

**What reassurance has the Commissioner asked for from the Chief Constable in relation to female offenders, and the production of a Female Offenders' Strategy, as recommended by the Ministry of Justice? Has he asked about the following:**

1. The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Women in the Penal system has concluded, based on data from 5 Police Forces, that police resources are being wasted on arresting women inappropriately, holding them in custody and releasing them without charge. It has also concluded that, for many women, contact with the police results in their criminalisation rather than recognising that they may be victims of DA. This clearly supports the argument for developing a multi-agency Strategy for dealing with women offenders.

**Has the PCC asked SYP for figures around how many women are arrested, held in custody and then released without charge?**

2. A recent Howard League briefing revealed that almost two-thirds of women who are denied bail and remanded in custody by Magistrates' Courts go on to be found not guilty, or to receive a non-custodial sentence which causes tremendous damage to them and their families, as well as the high risk of self-harm whilst in prison. In many such cases, women are brought directly from police cells to Court and have no opportunity to make arrangements for their children, or anyone they are caring for. At the end of 2019 the number of women on remand in prisons in England and Wales was 21% higher than at the end of the previous year.

**Has the Commissioner asked SYP for the number of women who are arrested, denied bail, remanded in custody and then not sentenced to custody and the annual figures to see what – if any – the increase has been in SY?**

**RESPONSE FROM THE PCC**

I have not asked the Chief Constable the specific questions you have set out. My role in relation to holding the Chief Constable to account is much broader than this, and covers a wide range of Force activity.

As you are aware from information you've had from my Office, the Force does not have a stand-alone Female Offender Strategy, but much activity is taking place under various national strategies. I have been assured by what is taking place around female offenders. The Force lead for female officers has just taken on a new role as Head of the Professional Standards Department, but when that settles down I will liaise with her, on this issue specifically (and have in mind your questions).

You will also be interested to learn that consideration is being given to a Ministry of Justice led Yorkshire and the Humber webinar in the new calendar year around the area's progress against the national female offender strategy. In anticipation of this, I have already asked the Chief Constable for an update on the Force's progress.

Finally, and as you know, I also Chair the LCJB which looks at specific issues from time to time. Indeed, I remember receiving a presentation from the CRC on issues specific to female

offenders. However, you are aware that most of the Board's activity at the moment is around the recovery of the criminal justice system following the Covid-19 pandemic.