

Women's Forensic Services and Planning Group: Status Update

April 2022

Introduction

Forensic Mental Health Services are specialist tertiary services that provide care and treatment for individuals who have a mental illness or learning disability and demonstrate offending behaviour or present a significant risk to others. Services offer multi-disciplinary assessment, consultation, care and treatment, which is proportionate to the situation, and are underpinned by risk assessment and management and treatment of offending behaviour.

The provision of forensic mental health services across NHS Scotland varies, particularly for female patients. With regard to high secure provision, there have been no high secure female beds in Scotland for either mental illness or intellectual disabilities since 2012 and no new admissions since 2008. Scottish women requiring high secure care are transferred south of the border to Rampton Hospital, the only UK female high secure facility. This has 50 beds with three separate services for women with major mental illness, intellectual disability or personality disorder. Since the establishment of this pathway, there have consistently been low numbers of Scottish female patients requiring transfer to high secure care, normally between zero and two at any one time. Since 2012, five women have been transferred to Rampton Hospital and there is currently one woman in Rampton Hospital transferred from Scotland. However, it has been argued that there may be under-representation with this figure, as some patients who may be considered to require high secure care are not referred through the pathway due to the timescales for transfer, which are considered problematic for clinical reasons, or due to the patient's conviction status of being on remand.

The present pathway for high secure care to Rampton can create significant clinical and operational challenges, while at the other end of the spectrum, low and medium secure female provision is sparse, with many services being centrally located. There can be blurred functions of wards and services which can lead to patients being cared for in mixed purpose services, such as rehabilitation and forensic, and mixed gender settings. As a result, many vulnerable female patients often end up in independent accommodation outwith their home localities and away from family and friends.

Purpose of Paper

This paper aims to summarise the significant work that has taken place to date in order to address the issues outlined with regard to female service provision and to provide an overview of current projects which are underway to develop appropriate services for women requiring secure care in Scotland.

Background

Women's Service and Pathways Across the Forensic Estate (2019)

In recognition of the challenges outlined above, NHS Board Chief Executives commissioned the Forensic Network to complete a review of the Women's Service and Pathways across the forensic mental health estate in January 2018. An options appraisal process was completed to explore high, medium and low secure settings and the results were laid out in full within the Women's Report published in March 2019.¹

The report sought to highlight the number of available female beds across the estate at that time, however acknowledged that there are many wards across the forensic estate which are mixed sex and mixed population (IPCU, forensic or rehabilitation) and was therefore difficult to determine exactly how many forensic female beds there were across the estate. An estimate of female beds across the estate was highlighted as follows:

| | Mental Illness (estimated) | Intellectual Disability (estimated) | Total |
|---------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| Low Secure | 16 | 3 | 19 |
| Low Rehab | 15 | 4 | 19 |
| IPCU/Locked | 20 | | 20 |
| Medium Secure | 13 | 4 | 17 |
| Total: | 64 | 11 | 75 |

The report concluded that the highest scored options in all three options appraisals would begin to address the challenges in service provision for female forensic patients:

- **High:** The development of a co-located high secure female service within medium security, would provide equity of service with male patients and preventing the need for Scottish patients to travel South of the Border for care. The co-location with medium security allows for economies of scale and resource during periods of significant demand fluctuation.
- **Medium:** The development of single sex medium secure accommodation at the Orchard Clinic, NHS Lothian, would support complex and vulnerable patients to access care in a suitable environment and reduce the number of patients having to access care South of the Border to obtain single sex medium secure care.
- **Low:** The development of a hybrid model of regional and local secure services would limit the amount of patients placed out of area in independent healthcare provisions away from their communities, families and friends. This would also provide equitable services to male patients.

Whilst the report focused on the configuration of inpatient services, it noted that there would be a requirement with any low secure option for local NHS Boards and partner agencies to ensure effective community and rehabilitation pathways are developed from services. The report also noted that effective solutions across all levels of secure care would rely on a coordinated regional approach with support from Health and Social Care Partnerships and Integrated Joint Boards.

The NHS Chief Executives group recommended that the four recommendations pertaining to low security and community services be taken forward through the National Planning Board. A Short-Life Working Group consisting of clinical and managerial representation, as well as representatives from the National Planning Board and Integrated Joint Boards was established in 2019 in order to take forward the recommendations.

¹ [Women's Service and Pathways across the Forensic Estate \(2019\)](#)

However, in March 2020, after discussion with the Chair of the Independent Review into the Delivery of Forensic Mental Health Services, it was agreed to put the work of the group on hold in order to await the outcome of the Review. The emergence of COVID-19 was an additional complicating factor at this time.

Independent Review into the Delivery of Forensic Mental Health Services

In February 2021, the final report of the Independent Review into the Delivery of Forensic Mental Health Services was published.² The report noted that current arrangements to provide high secure care for women outwith Scotland are not fit for purpose, neither procedurally, nor from a human rights perspective.

A number of recommendations in relation to the provision of forensic mental health services for women in Scotland were made:

Recommendation 3: A high secure service for women should be opened in The State Hospital within nine months of the publication of this Review.

- The design and staffing model for this unit must be able to appropriately flex to meet the care and treatment needs of both women with mental illness and women with a learning disability.
- It will be for the new Forensic Board to review and determine appropriate arrangements for high secure provision for women in the longer term.

Recommendation 4: The Short Life Working Group set up in response to the Forensic Network's report on the Women's Service and Pathways should reform to complete its work related to women's pathways across in medium secure, low secure and community forensic settings.

- The Short Life Working Group should initially report to the NHS Chief Executives' Group pending the formation of the new Forensic Board.
- Its work must ensure a pathway for women to transfer from prison for forensic mental health care and treatment when required.
- It should also consider the care needs of the group of women who may not meet the definition of 'forensic', but who are subject to conditions of security as their behaviour has not been able to be safely managed by generic services. While it is important not to draw these women inappropriately into forensic mental health services, there needs to be clear pathways around their longer term care and treatment. As such, representatives from the independent sector must be invited onto the Group.

Both recommendations from the report attracted significant attention from those working within forensic mental health services. In their response in October 2021, Scottish Government agreed that high secure provision for women is needed in Scotland and outlined plans to support the creation of an interim service within The State Hospital.³ It was also noted that the Forensic Network were making arrangements for the short-life working group to reform to consider the national, regional and local planning of services for women and implementation of the recommendations from the 2019 report.

² [Independent Review into the Delivery of Forensic Mental Health Services: Final Report \(2021\)](#)

³ [Scottish Government Response to the Independent Review into the Delivery of Forensic Mental Health Services \(2021\)](#)

Proposal for North of Scotland Regional Service

Whilst the outcome of the Independent Review was awaited, the North of Scotland Planning Group were exploring the possibility of a small, regional female low secure service for women. A proposal paper was submitted to the North of Scotland Chief Executives in February 2021, seeking approval to develop such a service in order to address the lack of provision and to adequately meet the needs of women requiring low secure care within the region. Further work on the proposal was noted to be required and regional planners from the North of Scotland continue to progress with this work, where possible.

Current Status

The Forensic Network Short-Life Working Group for Women's Forensic Services & Pathways reformed in November 2021. A new Chair was appointed, Prof. Angela Wallace (Nurse Director, NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde), and the Terms of Reference and membership of the group were refreshed and renewed at the first meeting. The group has had two meetings to date and is scheduled to meet on a 2-monthly basis.

In light of the recommendations within the Independent Review, membership of the group was extended to include representation from the independent sector and Regional Planning colleagues from the North of Scotland. This was to ensure that the development of any regional low secure services are planned and coordinated as part of a wider pathway for women in forensic mental health services. In addition, after discussion with the Mental Health Directorate, it was agreed that the initial scoping of the clinical service infrastructure for an interim female high secure should be aligned to the work of the short-life working group and so representation on the group was also sought from the Chief Executive of The State Hospital.

Next Steps

- The short-life working group is now looking to progress with its agreed remit. It has been agreed that an implementation plan will be developed, alongside colleagues within National Services Division (NSD), to ensure the delivery of equitable, high value health services for female forensic patients in Scotland.
- Across Spring 2022, a clinical infrastructure assessment will be conducted to establish a clinical model for the proposed high secure service in Scotland that is fit for purpose and takes account of the specific needs and rights of female forensic patients. As part of this process, the current service provision in place at Rampton High Secure Hospital will be assessed and draft admission criteria for female patients in NHS Scotland will be drafted.
- The Forensic Network Clinical Lead for Women and Deputy Clinical Lead will look to collate data to provide an updated needs assessment for women requiring secure care in Scotland. Consideration will also be given to the ongoing re-development of HMP Cornton Vale ('HMP Stirling') and any potential impact this may have on future patient need within Scottish forensic mental health services.