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Women's prisons: how can we improve primary care for women with severe mental illness?

Submission date
13/06/2024

Recruitment status
Recruiting

Registration date
28/06/2024

Overall study status
Ongoing

Last Edited
20/01/2026

Condition category
Mental and Behavioural Disorders

[X] Prospectively registered
[X] Protocol
[_] Statistical analysis plan
[_] Results
[_] Individual participant data
[X] Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol
Background and study aims
We do not know whether women with serious mental illness (SMI) in prison access primary care services. We would like to understand more about this. Hardly any evidence exists about how imprisoned women with SMI use primary care services. These services include general practice, dentists, eye health (opticians) and pharmacists. We want to find out how such services meet their healthcare needs and how these experiences are racially differentiated.

Who can participate?
1. Primary care practitioners who provide such services in women's prisons
2. Imprisoned women with a history of SMI aged over 18 years
3. Health and non-clinical prison staff with experience of working with imprisoned women with SMI

What does the study involve?
In part one the researchers will ask primary care practitioners over the telephone what range of primary care services are delivered in prison and describe what is working well for imprisoned women with SMI.
In part two the researchers will ask small groups of imprisoned women with SMI from a range of ethnic groups about possible inequalities in the provision of physical and mental health services offered to them.
In part three the researchers will talk to other staff in the prison in small groups about any barriers to providing primary care for women with SMI both within prison and following release.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
Not provided at time of registration

Where is the study run from?
Durham University (UK)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
November 2023 to June 2026

Who is funding the study?
National Institute for Health and Care Research (UK)

Who is the main contact?
Prof. Tammi Walker, tammi.walker@durham.ac.uk

Contact information

Type(s)
Public, Scientific, Principal investigator

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Additional identifiers

Clinical Trials Information System (CTIS)
Nil known

Integrated Research Application System (IRAS)
342813

ClinicalTrials.gov (NCT)
Nil known

Protocol serial number
NIHR206780

Study information

Scientific Title
Improving primary care services for imprisoned women with severe mental illness (IP-SIS)

Acronym
IP-SIS

Study objectives
Aims:
1. To explore the range of primary care services delivered to imprisoned women with serious mental illness (SMI) in England and describe what is working well.
2. To explore the treatment experiences and preferences of imprisoned women with SMI.
3. To describe preparations for transition from prison to mainstream primary care.

Objectives:
O1. To describe experiences of imprisoned women with SMI of primary care services across women's prisons in England.
O2. To explore perspectives of prison primary care practitioners and other prison staff on the delivery of primary care services in prisons.
O3. To explore potential inequalities in the provision of physical and mental health services for imprisoned women with SMI across ethnic groups in women's prisons.
O4. To develop a culturally and racially sensitive framework for understanding of the barriers and facilitators to providing primary care for women with SMI both within prison and following release.

Ethics approval required
Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)
approved 25/03/2025, Nottingham 2 REC (2 Redman Place, Stratford, London, E20 1JQ, United Kingdom; +44 207 104 8009; nottingham2.rec@hra.nhs.uk), ref: 24/EM/0286

Study design
Qualitative research design with interviews and focus groups

Primary study design
Observational

Study type(s)
Prevention, Quality of life, Treatment

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Improving primary care services for imprisoned women with serious mental illness

Interventions
The researchers will apply a qualitative research design over an 18-month period using semi-structured telephone/online interviews, focus groups and consensus groups in six women's prisons. Purposive sampling will be used throughout the project to ensure that the perspectives of women and staff from a range of different prison groupings are included.

Study sites will be women's prisons in England (there are none in Wales). The researchers will ask people in three groups to volunteer to take part.
1. Primary care practitioners (GPs and nurses) who provide healthcare services in prisons.
2. Imprisoned women with SMI from diverse ethnic backgrounds.
3. Clinical and non-clinical prison staff with experience of working with imprisoned women with SMI.

Intervention Type

Other

Primary outcome(s)
Participants’ perspectives and experiences of primary care services provided in women’s prisons, with a focus on women with severe mental illness in racially minoritised groups. Qualitative feedback and data from participants will be recorded and analysed using framework analysis. Measured at a single timepoint.

Key secondary outcome(s))
The potential inequalities in the provision of primary care services in women's prisons across ethnic groups. Qualitative feedback and data from participants will be analysed using framework analysis and a culturally and racially sensitive framework will be developed to understand the barriers and facilitators to providing primary care for women with severe mental illness in prison and following release. Measured at a single timepoint.

Completion date
30/06/2026

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
Phase 1: Primary care practitioners who work in female prisons
1. Aged 18+ years
2. Qualified primary care practitioners who have worked in a female prison for at least 3 months

Phase 2: Imprisoned women with SMI
1. Aged 18+ years
2. Have the mental capacity to give informed consent (discussion through Safer Custody Team)

Phase 3: Health and non-clinical prison staff
1. Aged 18+ years
2. Qualified or non-qualified prison staff who have worked in a female prison for at least 3 months

Participant type(s)
Employee, Health professional, Healthy volunteer, Service user, Other

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Mixed

Lower age limit
18 years

Upper age limit
65 years

Sex

All

Total final enrolment
0

Key exclusion criteria
Phase 1: Primary care practitioners who work in female prisons
1. Under the age of 18 years
2. Qualified primary care practitioners who have not worked in a female prison for at least 3 months

Phase 2: Imprisoned women with SMI
1. Under the age of 18 years
2. Unable to provide informed consent
3. Pose a significant risk to self and/or others

Phase 3: Health and non-clinical prison staff
1. Under the age of 18 years
2. Qualified or non-qualified prison staff who have not worked in a female prison for at least 3 months

Date of first enrolment
17/02/2025

Date of final enrolment
31/03/2026

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre
Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
Trust Headquarters
St Georges Hospital
Corporation Street
Stafford
England
ST16 3SR

Sponsor information

Organisation

Durham University

ROR
https://ror.org/01v29qb04

Funder(s)

Funder type
Government

Funder Name
National Institute for Health and Care Research

Alternative Name(s)
National Institute for Health Research, NIHR Research, NIHRresearch, NIHR - National Institute for Health Research, NIHR (The National Institute for Health and Care Research), NIHR

Funding Body Type
Government organisation

Funding Body Subtype
National government

Location
United Kingdom

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

IPD sharing plan summary
Not expected to be made available

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Protocol article		28/02/2025	03/04/2025	Yes	No
Participant information sheet	Participant information sheet	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes