



Women's Risk Needs Assessment (WRNA)

Briefing Document

Overview

The Women's Risk Needs Assessment (WRNA) is a validated, gender-responsive assessment tool specifically developed for women involved in the criminal justice system. It provides a structured, trauma-informed framework for identifying risk, needs, strengths, and responsivity factors that shape women's pathways into and out of offending. The WRNA incorporates dynamic criminogenic needs alongside protective strengths, enabling a holistic understanding of each woman's circumstances and supporting proportionate, individualised intervention planning.

Purpose and Function

The WRNA is designed to:

- Identify key predictors of reoffending for women, including both likelihood and frequency.
- Support evidence-led case planning and review.
- Strengthen continuity of care across agencies.
- Embed trauma-responsive and strengths-based practice within frontline services.

Who the WRNA is Designed For



Women involved in, at risk of entering, or transitioning through the criminal justice system



Women engaging with Women's Centres for support relating to trauma recovery, mental health, substance use, relationships, parenting, and socioeconomic adversity

Trauma-Informed Approach

The WRNA is grounded in recognised trauma-informed practice principles and reflects the high prevalence of trauma among justice-involved women.

It applies a trauma lens throughout assessment and casework by prioritising safety, trust, choice, collaboration, and empowerment. Trauma is explored sensitively and does not require detailed disclosure. Women retain control over what they choose to share.

The assessment reduces the risk of re-traumatisation by minimising repeated storytelling, using non-judgemental language, maintaining clear boundaries around disclosure, and supporting strong information continuity across services. This approach enables person-centred engagement while facilitating appropriate referrals and coordinated, holistic care.

Who Can Use the WRNA

The WRNA is available to certified end-users who have completed the University of Birmingham's bespoke WRNA training programme delivered via FutureLearn.

Eligible users include:



Frontline practitioners and caseworkers



Probation-aligned and social care professionals



Staff working within Women's Centres



Organisations delivering gender-responsive interventions requiring structured assessment to inform case planning, progress reviews, and exit pathways

Validation and Evidence Base

The [Women, Crime and Justice Research Group](#) at the University of Birmingham conducted the first comprehensive UK [validation of the WRNA](#).

The study analysed assessments completed by 506 women across seven Women's Centres in England and Wales and linked this data to Police National Computer records over a 12-month follow-up period. Findings confirmed the WRNA's ability to predict both the likelihood and frequency of reoffending within the UK criminal justice context, demonstrating strong functionality and predictive validity.

Licensing and Governance

The Women's Risk Needs Assessment (WRNA) tool (Copyright © 2013, University of Cincinnati, Ohio. All rights reserved), which is designed for use with criminal justice involved women. The support of Dr Emily Salisbury is gratefully acknowledged.

The WRNA is a licensed assessment tool held by the School of Social Policy and Society, College of Social Sciences, University of Birmingham.

Women's Centres and partner organisations must obtain formal permission to use the tool. Access is granted only to practitioners who have completed approved WRNA training, ensuring fidelity, accuracy, and the safe handling of sensitive information.

For more information, contact the Women, Crime and Justice Research Group at wrna.training@contacts.bam.ac.uk