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PRESS RELEASE

Advance launches its report

'A Strange Empty Space'

Women's experience of the Covid-19 lockdown

Survey of women in contact with the Criminal Justice System and supported by Advance's Minerva Services, sharing their experiences and impact of the pandemic and the lockdown in March to June 2020.

As we continue to face challenges due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we reflect on the impact of this experience on the women affected by the criminal justice system and their children.

Our survey aims to amplify the voices of the women with lived experiences supported by Advance's Minerva services. Women's own experiences of lockdown and the impact on their lives must be at the heart of our response over the coming months.

The Covid-19 crisis has exposed the increased hardship, risks and needs of women in the criminal justice system, who often already face multiple disadvantages, inequalities and barriers to accessing support. We must continue to develop services and policies that meet their needs.

The crisis has also presented an opportunity to shift our perspectives about disadvantage and those most vulnerable in society. The national response of support, innovation and community must create a long-lasting legacy to come out of these challenging times.

Our responses must ensure that women and their children affected by the criminal justice system, often facing multiple disadvantages and inequalities are

- Provided with the essentials such as food, clothing and basic hygiene packs to support their health and dignity
- Able to access support remotely, by providing them with mobile technology to address digital inequalities
- Offered emotional and mental health support, including specialist one-to-one holistic services and counselling where appropriate, to enable improved engagement with services

These recommendations, together with investment in whole-system approaches and in specialist community support and safe women-only centres which are outlined in the Ministry of Justice's 'Female Offender Strategy' and the Mayor of London's 'London Blueprint for Women', will enable us to break the cycle of harm and (re)offending and improve outcomes for the women and their children.

- Ends -



For further information

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Notes to editors:

About Advance

Advance was founded in 1998 and is an award-winning London-based innovative charity that supports women who have experienced domestic abuse and those who have committed crime to end their re-offending.

The charity's vision is a world in which women and children lead safe, violence-free, crime-free and equal lives so they can flourish and actively contribute to society. A women-only organisation delivering services for women, by women, Advance supports women and girls to be safe and rebuild their lives, and those committing offences or at risk of offending to break the cycle of harm and prevent the breakdown of families.

Since its inception, Advance has led the way in innovation in the sector with community, "through-the-gate", and whole-system co-located services for women in contact with the criminal justice system, including its Minerva services. Through its women's centres and advocates, the organisation delivers holistic, specialist one-to-one support and engaging group interventions tailored to women's needs. The charity's message is to encourage and empower women to take back control and rebuild their lives with its support.

Supporting women and children of all ages, the team also offers specialist domestic abuse services.

Each year, Advance supports over 7000 women and children.

advancecharity.org.uk Twitter: @ADVANCEcharity