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How many children does this issue affect?

Due to a lack of data collection, we do not know exactly how many children are affected by parental imprisonment in England and Wales each year. It is estimated that approximately 300,000 children are impacted each year, including upwards of 17,000 who lose their mother – most likely their primary carer – to imprisonment.

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Impact and support

In addition to all the above, children of prisoners often talk about experiencing the following emotions: grief, stigma, anxiety, embarrassment, overburdened, confusion, panic, fear, social isolation, guilt, relief.

Support from agencies associated with the family should: engage with family members, give children the opportunity to express themselves, listen carefully and reassure, make appropriate and prompt plans for support, and ensure that the safety and needs of the child are paramount.

What is the journey through the criminal justice system and how does it affect families?

1. Pre-arrest – Some children will be unaware of the criminal behaviour of their parent, others embarrassed or come to accept it as normal.

2. Arrest- Many children are present and will be impacted when their parent is arrested. Other children may be unaware and subsequently confused by their parent's unexplained absence.

3. First court appearance – This may be the first time the family have seen the family member since arrest. This can create anxiety, confusion, or anger. The court appearance will be followed by a wait for trial, which can be long, during which the accused may be placed on remand or placed on bail.

4. Trial and sentencing – During the trial family personal details will be made public which can lead to humiliation/ retribution within the community.

5. Serving a sentence - If a person receives a custodial sentence they will be sent to a prison as determined by several factors including proximity, capacity, and category of prison. The family may not initially know which prison their family member has been sent to. There are considerably fewer women's prisons, so it is very likely that a woman receiving a custodial sentence will be sent further from home.

6. Preparation for release and release - Prisoners should get practical support in preparation for them to re-enter the community. During this time families are very rarely involved in the release plan. Resettlement is a very critical time for the offender and their family.

7 Where to find more information:

Lancashire Violence Reduction Network/
Trauma Informed Lancashire:

**Impact on children of parental
Incarceration Toolkit**

**Mia's Story – A picture book about having
a dad in prison**

**Freya's Story – A picture book about
having a mother in prison**

**Series of leaflets for young people with a
dad in prison**

Invisible Walls Accord Toolkit
<https://www.barnardos.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/CC552-Barnardos-InvisibleWalls-V14%28LowRes-Spreads%29.pdf>

PACT website
<https://www.prisonadvice.org.uk/prison-visitors-guides>

**POPs website including video – Because
it's our right -**
<https://www.partnersofprisoners.co.uk/international/>

7 Minute Briefing Impact of Parental Incarceration

Visits

Where permitted, visits are a vital part in maintaining relationships. This can be a very difficult experience for the child/young person, particularly if they don't know what to expect. Helping to prepare a child for the visit, can greatly reduce their anxiety. Many prisons have extensive websites providing detailed information, including virtual tours, contact details for the Family Liaison Service and information regarding Special Family Visits and expenses in relation to visits. Although it can be a positive experience to see a family member, having to leave them again can be very distressing.

Prison visits during term time should be classed as an authorised absence.

Release

There are a range of release and resettlement plans including various types of ROTL arrangements (Release on Temporary Licence).

Anxiety and stress for the family may peak at this stage, as the prisoner and their family must readjust to living in the community and possibly living together again. Many people will be released on license and there will be conditions that they need to follow.

Contact arrangements

The operational manager with delegated authority in the prison, will make the decision regarding the appropriate level of contact ranging from level 1 (No contact) to 5 (Full contact). The decision must consider a range of factors including the wishes of the child, previous history, and reports from agencies. The agreed level should be shared and explained to child and parent.