

Family support for children and families affected by imprisonment

A handbook for Families First services in Wales

Believe in children



Barnardo's
Cymru

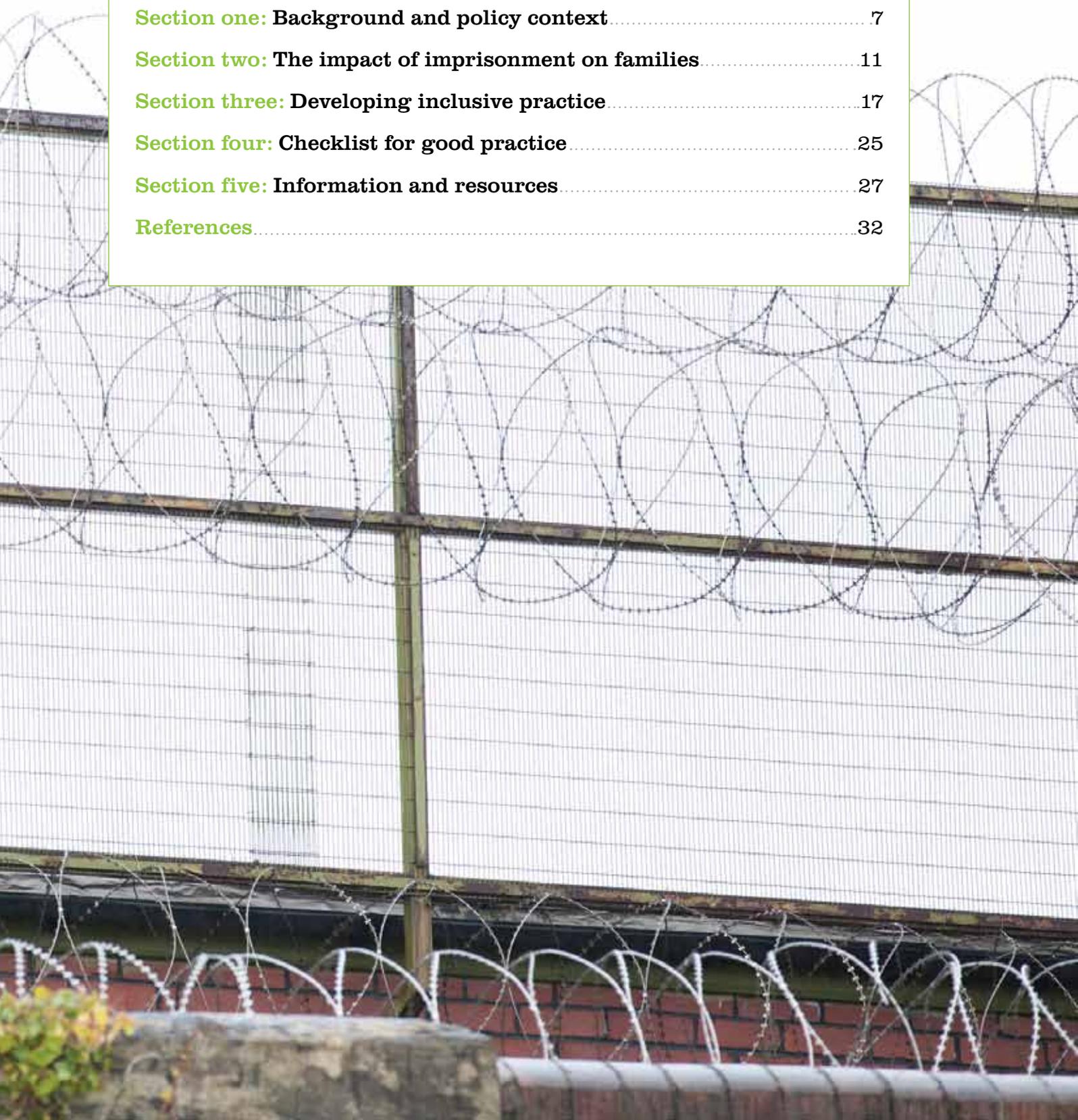
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Foreword



The children of prisoners and their families are a highly vulnerable group. Families First services, with their combination of universal and targeted services, their base in the community and their potential for early intervention, are a key resource for meeting the needs of this group.

This handbook is designed to be an accessible aid to practice for busy staff and their managers as they strive to develop their reach to these children and families. It is not a call for more resources. The aim is to support services to target resources effectively towards the most vulnerable.

It is based on Barnardo's experience of delivering services inside prisons and services for the families of offenders in the community, and also our policy and research work in relation to this group. In addition, Barnardo's runs a number of services for families of prisoners and offenders and we have used this experience to focus on the needs of children and their families who are affected by imprisonment.

In the handbook, we use examples from current practice work and research consultations to illustrate key challenges in work with this group.

We hope the handbook will be widely used and have a real impact on the way in which Families First and other family support services respond to the needs of these families.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Yvonne Rodgers". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Yvonne Rodgers

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Acknowledgements

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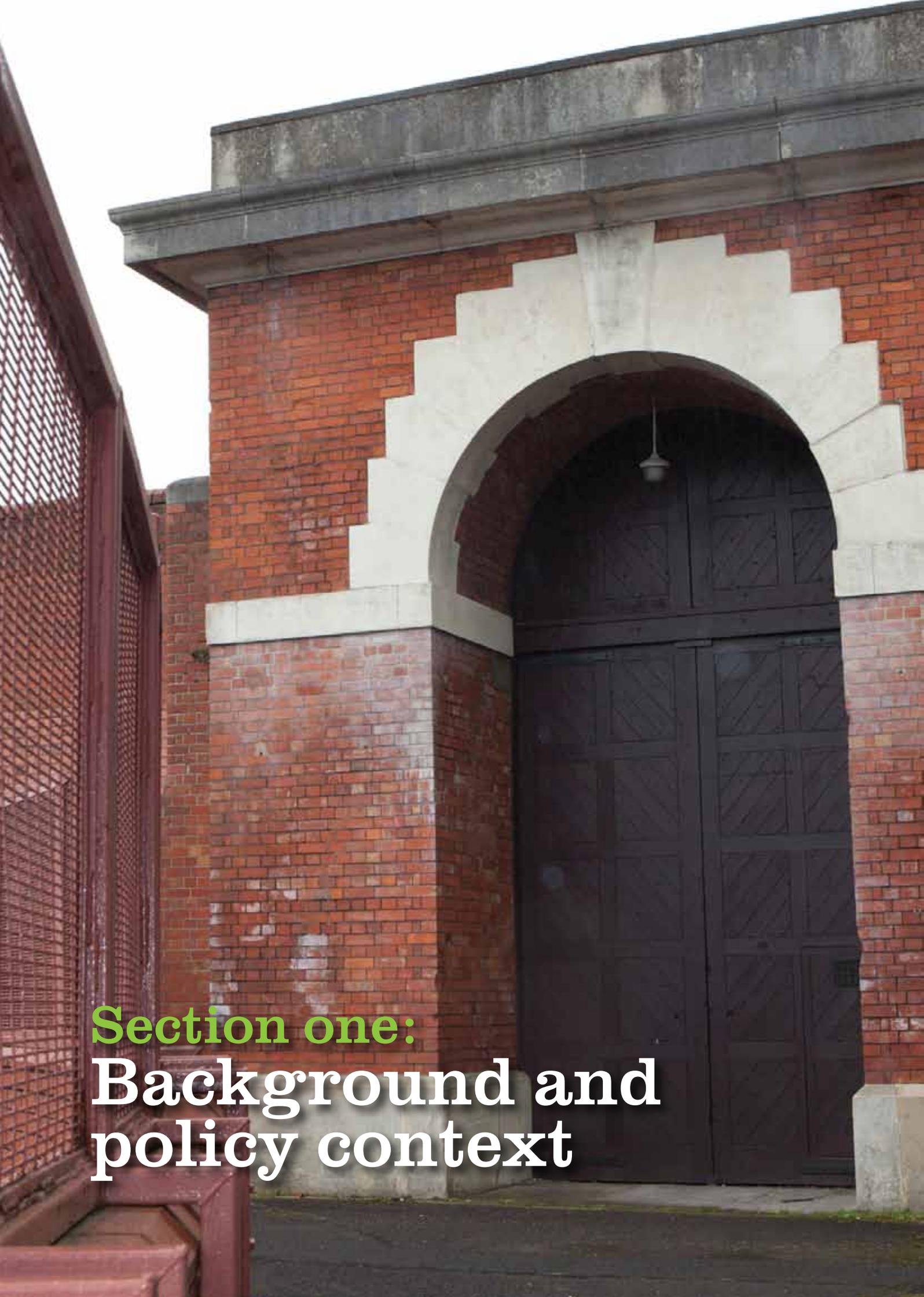
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A number of other Barnardo's staff contributed to the handbook, including Tim Carter, Jendayi Serwah, Elizabeth Slade, Nicky Smith, Jeanie Lynch, Duncan Stanway and Allison Wicker.

Practitioners from Barnardo's and other agencies contributed case examples. We also benefited from the contributions of colleagues from the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), including staff at Eden House, a service for women offenders in Bristol.

Notes

1. The handbook is aimed at Families First services in Wales and is also intended to work in conjunction with other Welsh Government flagship programmes, including Flying Start and Communities First. It has been adapted from *Under fives and their families affected by imprisonment: a handbook for Sure Start Children's Centres*, developed by Barnardo's South West.
2. For the purpose of the handbook, the term 'children and families affected by imprisonment' includes:
 - families where a father or mother is in prison
 - families where someone of significance in the lives of children is in prison (for instance, a brother or sister, grandparent, step-parent, partner of a parent) families where someone has been in prison and where this continues to have an impact on the lives of children.
 - families where someone has been in prison and where this continues to have an impact on the lives of children.
3. In the handbook we refer to 'reach'. This is usually defined (Barnardo's 2011) as:
 - the extent of engagement with families at risk of poor outcomes who may be in need of support, but are less likely to take up the services on offer.
4. The idea behind the enclosed A3 poster is that Families First services can display this prominently to make it clear that families affected by imprisonment are welcome. We have left a space on the poster where details of the service's relevant activities (for instance, groups for partners of prisoners) can be written.



Section one:
**Background and
policy context**

Section one: Background and policy context

Over recent years, there has been a welcome recognition of the needs of children and families affected by imprisonment (see for instance Social Care Institute for Excellence, 2008), but although we now have fairly comprehensive research information on the impact of imprisonment on children and families, there is still a lack of guidance on how mainstream service providers can meet the needs of this group.

In Wales there has been a notable lack of attention to this issue. Despite continued development within criminal justice systems operating in Wales to recognise the parental role of offenders, there has been a lack of guidance for family support providers.

The pioneering of the Families First programme in Wales has included examples of referral assessment tools that capture information on parental offending. However, although the programme has already engaged with many families affected by parental imprisonment, no specific resource to assist those challenged with implementing the programme has been available.

The Welsh Government's flagship Families First programme aims to develop an integrated approach to family support in Wales, organised so that the support provided is:

- family-focused: taking a whole-family approach to improving outcomes
- bespoke: tailoring help to individual family circumstances
- integrated: with effective co-ordination of planning and service provision across organisations, ensuring that needs assessment and delivery are jointly managed and that there is a seamless progression for families between different interventions and programmes
- proactive: seeking early identification and appropriate intervention for families
- intensive: with a vigorous approach and relentless focus, adapting to families' changing circumstances

- local: identifying the needs of local communities and developing appropriate service delivery to fit those needs, with particular regard for the opportunities to link with, for example, the Flying Start and Communities First programmes.

Four national outcomes have been identified for the Families First programme:

- working-age people in low-income families gain employment and progress within it
- children, young people and families, in or at risk of poverty, achieve their potential
- children, young people and families are healthy, safe and enjoy wellbeing
- families are confident, nurturing, and resilient.

Research shows that children and families affected by imprisonment are a key group in terms of disadvantage.

Children of offenders have significantly poor outcomes compared with their peers. There is considerable evidence of intergenerational offending. As they grow up, the children of prisoners are approximately three times more likely to be involved in delinquent activity compared with their peers. They are also more than twice as likely to experience mental health difficulties (Social Care Institute for Excellence, 2008).

Additionally, research shows that having a parent in prison increases the likelihood of the child experiencing poverty and the family becoming vulnerable to housing disruption (Smith et al, 2007). There is also an increased likelihood of children entering the care system – particularly when women are imprisoned.

The necessity to meet the needs of families affected by parental offending has been recognised by some local authorities in Wales; however, in spite of research, there is no clear evidence of a systematic approach to including this issue in the development of family support policy and services.



Numbers of children affected by parental imprisonment

More children face family breakdown each year through parental imprisonment than face being taken into care or being made the subject of a child protection plan. Current estimates are approximately 200,000 children in England and Wales.

The majority of the children will have a father in prison because the number of men in prison is far higher than the number of women. In December 2011, the prison population in England and Wales was 87,297, comprising 83,086 men and 4,211 women (Ministry of Justice, 2011).

We do not know the number of under-fives with a father in prison, but it is likely to be proportionately high because the prison population is significantly weighted to younger adults (who are more likely to have young children). For instance, in 2010, 35 per cent of the men in prison were aged 21-29 (Ministry of Justice, 2010).

It is estimated that each year 18,000 children in England and Wales are separated from their mothers by imprisonment (Corston, 2007). Of these children, 34 per cent are under five years old.

These figures do not take into account the number of children who might be affected by having a close non-biologically related adult in prison – for instance, a mother’s partner. Crucially these are also estimates of the number with a parent in prison at any one time. It does not include the cumulative impact of imprisonment and therefore the very large number of children who at some stage in their childhood will experience the imprisonment of a parent or other close adult.

Invisible families

There is no local information that schools, children’s services or health services can access to identify which children in a local area are affected by having a parent in prison. Some parents may tell mainstream services or their Families First worker that a family member is in prison and some agencies may refer individual families with this information, but there is currently no systematic information available.

Adding to the ‘invisibility’ of this group is the stigma that families in this situation may experience. This stigma in local communities may mean that families are unwilling to identify themselves to agencies. Also, the families may themselves, because of their circumstances, be isolated and therefore less aware of local

Section one: Background and policy context

facilities and services provided by Families First and how to access them. In some cases the stigma may mean that families uproot themselves from their community areas to 'start life afresh' and are therefore less aware of local support services or how to access them.

In view of the extent of disadvantage experienced by many families where a parent is imprisoned, it is likely that many children and young people affected by imprisonment are already known to services. However, it is less likely that the available support recognises the specific impact that the imprisonment of a family member is having on the family.

A key target group for Families First

Where a mother (or more often) a father or step-parent is in prison, a whole-family approach needs to take into account the role of that parent. The organisations working with the imprisoned parent need to take a bespoke and flexible approach to support the family in the community whilst he/she is in custody and during the time of adjustment following release.

Working with the remaining family in the community is unlikely to secure the intended outcomes when the impact of imprisonment of a family member is not dealt with nor support offered in preparation for and following release of the absent parent. Furthermore, although parents in prison may be offered support in their parenting role through parenting courses, for example, if this is not mirrored with work with the family in the community, the progress made by the imprisoned parent may have limited effect.

The Team Around the Family model, which is a core element of the Families First programme, must include integration with services working with all family members – including those in prison. Similarly, the Joint Assessment Family Framework operated by each local authority needs to include a full picture of the family circumstances,

including information about family members serving custodial sentences.

The Families First programme principles of a family-focused, whole-family approach tailoring help to individual family circumstances, means that provision under the programme is in a unique position to address the difficulties faced by children and young people affected by imprisonment. In addition, the nature of the programme means that it can provide a critical service for maintaining continuity in the child's life while the family goes through the turmoil of having a parent in prison. This could make a difference to the child's ability to engage in and benefit from education and to enjoy good emotional wellbeing.



Section two:

**The impact of
imprisonment
on families**

Section two: The impact of imprisonment on families

In this section, we look at the impact of imprisonment of parents on their children and families. Research points to differences in the experiences of men and women offenders, so we treat these separately.

In what follows, it is important to keep in mind that there can be a wide variety in the impact of a parent's imprisonment on the lives of children. In some cases, relationships may not be strong and the imprisonment may have little impact on the child. Equally, there are likely to be some families where the imprisonment of a parent makes the life of the child more straightforward. In some cases, the imprisonment of a parent may mean the child is safer, although of course that does not necessarily mean that the child does not experience loss.

It is also crucial to keep in mind that parental imprisonment is likely to be significantly correlated with a range of family problems, including domestic violence and drug and alcohol misuse (Prison Reform Trust, 2011).

This is particularly the case for women (Ministry of Justice, 2009).

For Families First referral pathways, a family being identified as affected by imprisonment should be considered a key indicator for the possibility of other difficulties. The specific difficulties identified below should therefore be seen as additional to other key indicators of need.

Impact of imprisonment of fathers

The family

The family is likely to be put under stress. This stress may be the result of the mother coping with her own emotional loss, anxiety and perhaps anger and at the same time trying to juggle the needs of the children concerned. The prisoner may also be putting pressure on the mother in terms of demands for reassurance etc.



'I really miss him. I'm always in tears. He's missing so much of [son's name] growing up.'

Barnardo's research interview

- The pressure may be particularly acute in the early stages of imprisonment. The family may not have known the father was going to be sent to prison. If it is the first time the family has experienced imprisonment, they may not know about many of the practicalities, including how to make contact or how to arrange visits.
- The mother may be in a conflicted position, not herself wanting contact with the father but feeling that it is important that relationships are maintained between the child/ren and father.
- The family may be experiencing stigma from their wider family or local community as a result of the father going to prison. There might have been local press reports about the crime and so the family's situation may be well known in the community. Some people in the local community may feel that part of the punishment is that the children and family have a tough time (e.g. 'he should have thought about that before he did what he did').
- Related to the above, the family may be experiencing isolation from previously supportive networks. This may particularly be the case if the family decides to keep the imprisonment a secret and consequently withdraws from contact.
- In some cases, the imprisonment may lead to the family feeling that they have to move out of an area because of threats/ostracism etc.
- This potential transience may be associated with a breakdown in relationships with trusted local professionals such as health visitors.
- A father going to prison may have a significant impact on family finances. Earnings may stop and the family forced on

to benefits. (In some cases family finances might of course improve as a result of a father going into prison who had previously accessed a disproportionate amount of the family's money).

'...when [partner] was here and working he would have been able to buy [son] more clothes and things. Obviously he wasn't here when he was born... without him being here and working I couldn't go out and buy things when I needed them.'

Barnardo's research interview

- There may be costs associated with imprisonment that further undermine family finances, including the cost of visiting and the cost of providing 'treats' for the prisoner inside.
- Visiting the father in prison may be a particularly stressful time for the family. It is likely to involve long tiring journeys and waits at the prison. Stresses may be increased if the family is facing other challenges such as having a disabled child. Pent up family emotions may be released during the visit.

'When we go to see him... [three-year-old] is just evil until the next day and with [father] being away, it's like "where's daddy gone...?"'

Barnardo's research interview



Children with a father in prison

Depending on their developmental stage the children may be experiencing:

- a negative impact on their mother's parenting capacity as a result of the stress she is experiencing.
- a sense of loss and anxiety at the departure of the parent.
- an underlying feeling of confusion because they don't know what is happening to the father.

Other considerations are:

- If children know their father is in prison, they may have worrying thoughts about what happens there and be frightened for his safety.
- Significant changes in the family finances may have an impact on the children's sense of security and more generally their health and wellbeing.
- There may be a breakdown of the children's relationships with trusted adults, including wider family members, through the family being ostracised, withdrawing from contacts or 'moving right away'.
- Visiting the father in prison may be a time of particular stress for the children. It may

involve a tiring journey followed by a long wait in unfamiliar and perhaps frightening surroundings. The children will be searched.

When children see their father, this may be accompanied by stress between the adults. It may also create confusion for the children. Visiting facilities will differ between prisons, with some being relatively child-friendly but others being very formal. In some prison visiting rooms, the father may not be able to hold or cuddle his child.

Impact of the offence on family

Particular offences may lead to increased family complexity for young children. A father, for instance, may be in prison as a result of sexual offences committed against an older sibling.

The young child may experience all the loss associated with the father going to prison, but in addition to this there may be restrictions on the child visiting and restrictions on contact when the father leaves prison.

Impact of the imprisonment of mothers

Although women offenders are only a small minority of the overall prison population, they have often experienced very significant

difficulties in their lives and have complex needs. For instance, a high proportion are identified as having mental health and drug and alcohol misuse problems. Also, a significant number have suffered abuse or domestic violence (see Howard League for Penal Reform, 2011, for a review of research).

The following are some of the specific factors related to maternal imprisonment:

- The impact on children is likely to be very great when a mother goes into prison because mothers are far more likely to have sole responsibility for childcare.
- The child is much more likely to move from the family home if the mother is imprisoned. Research has shown that only five per cent of children remain in their own homes once a mother has been sentenced (Prison Reform Trust, 2000). Some will be cared for by their father. Many will either be looked after by wider family members (particularly grandparents) or enter the care system. A Ministry of Justice (2009) report found that 12 per cent of children of female prisoners were in care with foster parents or had been adopted.
- If the child goes into care or to foster parents, this will obviously have implications for the parental challenges the mother will face on release. Gelsthorpe et al (2007) state: 'Women's relationships do not always survive their imprisonment'. Moreover, some women face huge difficulties in re-establishing relationships with their children after release from prison, especially where children have been taken into care or where the separation has been long term.
- Not only may personal and family relationships break down, but also relationships with key professionals (health visitors etc.) may be affected, to the detriment of the child.
- There are fewer prisons for women, and these are typically a long way from where the family lives. This can make it difficult for children to visit their mothers, and therefore for women prisoners to maintain a relationship with their children whilst imprisoned. For the child it may mean long, tiring and emotionally charged visits.



‘Two children have a mother in prison and they are being looked after by an uncle. The mother is in prison more than 200 miles away. The uncle drives them to visit their mother as frequently as he can but the journey involves an overnight stay. Because money is tight they sleep in the car in a motorway service area.’

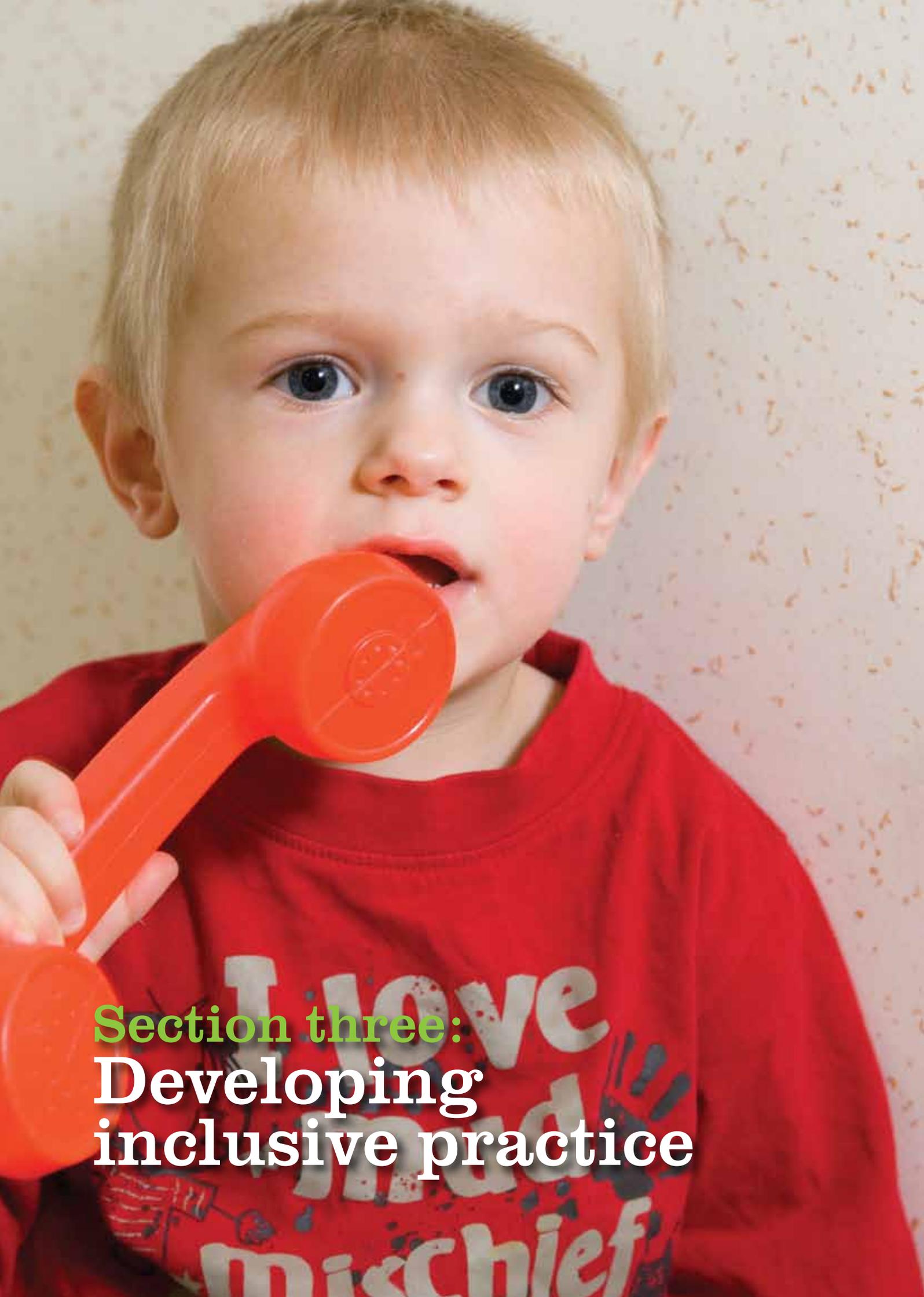
Barnardo’s research interview – children aged five+

particular dilemma may be the ‘catch 22’ that the mother cannot get accommodation unless her children are with her, but she cannot have her children returned to her without accommodation (Corston, 2007). For the children, this can extend the period of uncertainty and confusion.

- On leaving prison, the mother may face additional stigma and isolation. Not only will she have the stigma of criminality but she may also face the stigma of being seen to have deserted her children by risking imprisonment.

Women in prison

- Women from Wales who are sentenced to custody serve their sentence in prisons in England as there is no female custodial establishment in Wales; figures obtained from NOMS Cymru estimate that there are approximately 250 women from Wales in English prisons at any one time; those serving longer sentences are held further afield from Wales. Therefore, the impact on children and families is increasingly significant by virtue of distance, with long travelling to visit, and accessing Wales-based services a challenge. Research suggests that up to 55 per cent of women interviewed in prison custody are mothers of children under the age of 18.
- Problems for the mother may continue on release. Where the children are young, she may have missed important stages in their development, lack confidence in parenting and feel she is a stranger to them.
- The mother could also face practical difficulties on release, such as a delay in receiving benefits.
- Housing difficulties can also be very important when the mother leaves prison. Some women may lose their homes. One



Section three:
**Developing
inclusive practice**

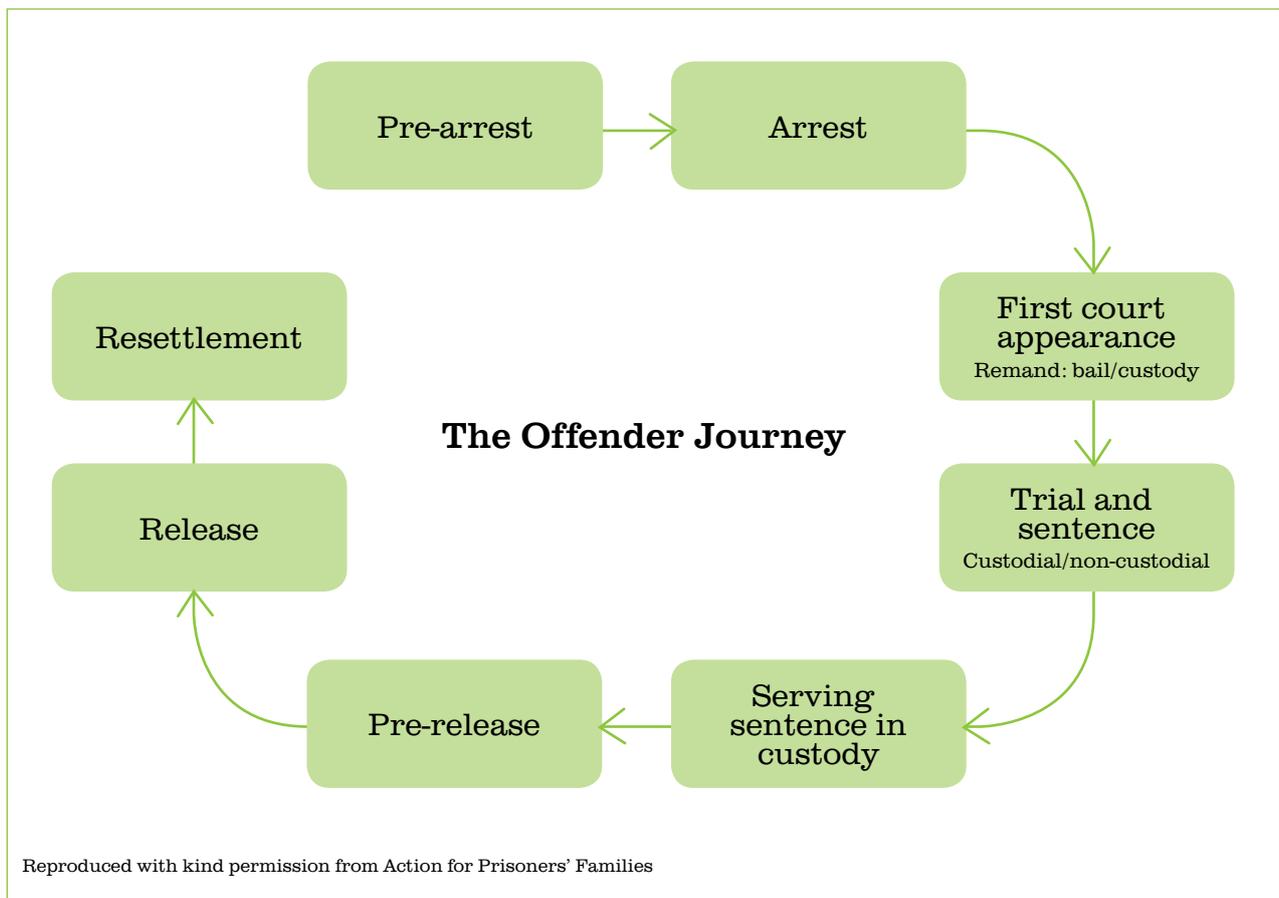
Section three: Developing inclusive practice

Providing services for families affected by imprisonment is a key aspect of inclusive practice. Good practice in relation to children and families affected by imprisonment involves two aspects. The first is effectively engaging with a group of families who are likely to be 'hard to reach', or perhaps more crucially are likely to find the Families First service hard to reach. The second is direct work with families, parents and children

which engages with the daily reality of the effects of imprisonment.

In terms of Families First work, it is helpful to think in terms of the 'offender journey' and the effects on children and families of different stages of this journey.

This 'journey' has been presented by Action for Prisoners' Families in the following way:



There will be different requirements of staff in their work with children and families who have a parent in prison at different stages in this journey.

Engaging with families

Engaging with families affected by imprisonment produces particular challenges. As we have discussed, parents in this situation may feel overwhelmed by the pressures in their lives, and they may be isolated and know little about local services. They may feel stigmatised and unwilling to be involved in community-based services where they feel other parents will look down on them.

Formal pathways

It is essential to develop formal pathways between Families First services and local offender management services.

It is obviously important to develop links with prisons themselves, either through direct support of activities in prisons or through referrals from prison staff.

Also when delivering on the Families First principle that services are integrated, effective co-ordination of planning and service provision across organisations is essential. Whilst ensuring that needs assessment and delivery are jointly managed and that there is a seamless progression for families between different interventions and programmes, formal arrangements with offender management services are essential.

Offender management services need to be made aware of local developments in relation to the Families First programme and should be identified as a key source of referrals. Developing close ties and liaison between local offender management services (predominately the Probation Service) and Families First services is crucial.

In developing effective pathways between relevant services, it is important that attention

is given to breaking down the barriers that can be a result of different professional cultures. It is difficult to produce hard and fast guidelines around this, but a starting point is to share, at a face-to-face level, the different outcomes that each professional group might have. But in doing this, it is also important to recognise commonalities. For instance, professionals in the criminal justice system will acknowledge the impact that developing support networks has on offending behaviour, and developing these same support networks will be regarded as crucial by Families First staff for securing the best outcomes for families.

In addition, Families First services should make links with local services that are likely to be involved with families affected by imprisonment. For instance, services run by charities such as Mind and Shelter are likely to be in contact with families in this situation, as will local substance misuse services.

Parents affected by imprisonment may be put off seeking support themselves because of concerns about how staff and others will respond to them. Work is needed to make staff across mainstream and community services aware of the impact of parental imprisonment. Families First information for professionals and families is needed that makes it clear that families being affected by imprisonment can be supported.

Additionally, making it clear to all users that families affected by imprisonment are welcome will be important as will be the need to develop a general culture whereby the children and families of offenders are not seen as guilty of offending by association. This can be done in a number of ways, such as by messages about families being affected by imprisonment being welcome (we hope the poster included in this handbook will be useful in this respect).

Ormiston Prison Link project delivers special children's visits in prisons where fathers have the freedom to move around, interact and engage in activities with their children. Local children's centre staff have attended these special visits to deliver

activity sessions with the families.

Local children's centre staff have also provided activities for families at the visitors' centre outside the prison. At these sessions the families are given information about what is on offer at local children's centres.

Children's centre staff also attend events held for prisoners such as resettlement open days where they meet with prisoners and provide information on support available at children's centres.

The way in which highly vulnerable mothers may come to use similar services in England has drawn on practitioner feedback on what works in engaging hard to reach families. The following approaches are seen to be effective:

- inclusive ethos, flexible 'can-do' attitudes and persistence – this involves working at parents' own pace, encouraging them to join groups and courses when they are ready and persisting through phone calls, texts, befriending, offering lifts etc.
- people skills and awareness – recruiting staff with the skills and awareness to work confidently with diverse service users, including those facing specific barriers, those with challenging behaviour and those for whom there are safeguarding concerns
- accessibility and location of the service
- representative images and literature.

Families affected by imprisonment may face practical difficulties relating to benefits, housing, debt etc. It is important that there is a member of the team who takes the lead on these issues, knowing about responses to the practical difficulties that are likely to occur. If it is unrealistic for a staff member to develop this expertise, then there should be clear knowledge about which local services people can be directed to. For women offenders, this will include developing a relationship with any women's community service operating locally.

Families affected by imprisonment may face specific practical difficulties relating

to maintaining contact with the prisoner, arranging visits etc. A staff member should be able to advise families on such matters or tell them where they can obtain this information (see section five).

Families First workers need access to information and resources that can assist them in supporting children and in understanding their world in relation to parental imprisonment. Children may be experiencing a sense of loss because a parent has been taken from their lives. The experience may be more confusing because they do not comprehend the reasons. It may also be difficult because they are unlikely to understand the timing involved and when the parent may return home. In addition, there may be specific situations which will be confusing for the young child. Visiting the parent in prison may raise disturbing questions. Why can't the parent cuddle or hold me? Why can't the parent stand up and move around with me?¹ Why can't the parent come home with us?

Underlying this may be a more general anxiety about the perceived changed position of the parent in terms of authority and power to organise the world for the child's benefit – a key element in the child's developing sense of security.

Working directly with families, parents and children

As we have emphasised, families affected by imprisonment are likely to suffer a range of interconnected difficulties, such as domestic violence and drug and alcohol misuse. Local Families First programmes, because of their approach and the principles underpinning the programme, are well positioned to offer an integrated response to the needs of the family and continuity in the life of the child

Isolation

Families affected by imprisonment may face isolation as a result of breakdown of community and wider family relationships,

1 These two questions will depend on the visiting regulations of individual prisons.



housing transience and stigmatisation. Practice strategies for increasing network links can include helping families to make supportive links in their communities or re-establish supportive links with their wider family. This can be done through the daily activities of the centre – meetings, drop-ins, trips, activities etc. In the case of a breakdown in support from the wider family, family meetings could be considered.

Parent–child relations

Families affected by imprisonment can face difficulties in parent–child relationships. Practice responses can involve skilled support work to address these difficulties. In the case of either fathers or mothers who have been imprisoned and are returning to parenting, this may involve working with a lack of parenting skills and confidence as well as working to re-establish trusting relationships with children. In some serious cases it may mean working with families where there is a child protection plan.

Key crisis points

Families affected by imprisonment are likely to face key crisis points.

One of these will be at the start of sentence. There can be a whole range of practical and emotional difficulties that need to be addressed at this point. These can include the family finding out how to visit and maintain contact and the emotional bewilderment of young children.

The following case notes illustrate the challenges that families can face at the point of imprisonment:

Support from PACT

A parent called the family support worker, anxious about her son who had been imprisoned unexpectedly.

The support worker was able to talk to the parent and offer her advice and information, including information about visiting the prison and the assisted prison visits scheme. The parent booked a visit and called PACT (Prison Advice and Care Trust) to inform them that she had done so; the family support worker met her at the gate and joined her in the process to relieve her anxiety.

In a subsequent conversation, she was able to discuss whether to tell her youngest son about his sibling's imprisonment and to talk through her options; she was put in touch

Section three: Developing inclusive practice

with APF (Action for Prisoners' Families) and was shown some of the resources that they could provide. Further information provided included information on the tagging system and enquiries into courses that her son could attend whilst in prison.

The result of this was that the parent was reassured and had an easy point of access to information. Her first visit was less distressing, and having someone she knew to walk in with, eased the anxiety of the visit. She consequently told her youngest son, using the resources from APF, and brought him in for a visit during half term. The support worker then met them on the way out to see how it had gone; they found having someone take an interest very touching.

*Integrated Family Support Coordinator,
HMP Swansea.*

In many cases, a parent going into prison will present a range of challenges in the different 'domains' of the child's life. It is important to approach these in a 'joined up' way and to offer continuity to the child.

One of the questions that practitioners are often asked is what relatives or the parent at home should tell the children about a mother or father being in prison. The best approach is to advise them to tell the truth

within their understanding of the child's ability to comprehend.

Telling the child

A mother disclosed to the outreach practitioner that her partner had gone to prison and that she had told the children that he had gone on holiday. The prison link worker went on a joint home visit to the mother to provide advice, support and information on how to tell the children where the father was. Ormiston's 'Visiting my dad' book was used to support this.

**Ormiston Prison Link Project
(see section five for ways to access
Ormiston publications)**

The prisoner returning to the community and perhaps directly to the family setting can be another crisis point in the offender's 'journey' at which the Families First service can provide support.

In the case of a father returning home from prison, there may be a range of challenges which are appropriate for skilled centre support. These may include unrealistic expectations about what family life will be like, uncertainty about parent-child relations, tensions and possibly anger between the mother and father, and stress of practical



situations, including finances, attempting to find work etc.

The content of the work undertaken will need to be agreed by both parents, but the 'crisis' of the parent returning home may be a very important time for the centre to engage with families.

Mothers leaving prison

For mothers, returning to parenting from prison may be a particularly challenging time. A key factor will be the length of sentence a mother has served.

Families First teams may be called upon to work and support the mother in relation to bonding and attachment issues. There may also be a lack of confidence in parenting skills, ability to 'cope' in general and ability to safeguard the child. In addition, women returning home may be very wary about accessing support because they may fear that scrutiny will mean they lose their children again (Gelsthorpe et al, 2007).

Mothers will also be moving from a structured environment where actions are controlled, into a position where they need to take decisions about their own welfare and the welfare of their children.

Compounding these challenges, as already indicated, may be housing problems and achieving somewhere safe for the mother to be reunited with her children.

All of these challenges will need recognition and skilled support, close liaison and 'joined up working' with other professionals.

Women's Turnaround service

Julie (29) suffered from domestic violence for 10 years. Eventually she retaliated and assaulted her partner and was arrested. She was convicted of assault and sentenced to 15 months in prison, of which she served 4 months.



Section three: Developing inclusive practice

While Julie was in custody, her child was left with her abusive partner in the family home. When Julie was released, she had to return to the house wearing a tag for another four months. The house had been badly damaged in her absence, and she found herself back in the same abusive relationship. Julie and her child were able to escape to a women's refuge.

Julie was able to end the relationship and return to the house safely with her daughter. However, she now had to deal with new problems as a result of her time in prison: not only the emotional repercussions of a prison sentence, separation from her daughter and the effects of domestic abuse, but also practical issues, including debts and replacing damaged furniture and appliances in her home. Julie was referred to Turnaround and received support to rebuild her life, sorting out benefits and receiving a grant towards a new cooker etc. Julie returned to education and started a course, improving her confidence and motivation.



Section four:
**Checklist for
good practice**

Section four: Checklist for good practice

The purpose of this handbook is to support Families First managers and staff to reach and work with children and families affected by imprisonment. The checklist below is

designed to be used by managers and staff to assess whether they are moving towards good practice in relation to children and families affected by imprisonment.

We recognise that children and families affected by imprisonment are a very important group for our service to be working with.	
We recognise that in our reach area there are almost certainly children and families affected by the imprisonment of either a father or mother.	
We understand the different ways in which the imprisonment of a father or a mother may affect children. We include coverage of this in team meetings and training.	
We recognise that different services may be available to offer support to families, depending on whether it is their mother or their father who has entered custody.	
We are clear to local agencies that we welcome and work with this group of children and families.	
When considering opportunities to work with prisons and establish referral pathways, we consider both the male and female prisons.	
We develop close links with probation trusts, local integrated offender management schemes and women’s community services; we encourage referrals and if appropriate set up service level agreements about referral paths and content of work.	
We recognise the importance of health visitors in knowing the backgrounds of families in our reach area and actively encourage them to refer children and families affected by imprisonment to the centre.	
We are clear to the local community that we welcome and work with this group of children and families (for instance, publicising through posters and newsletters).	
In our practice work, we support children and families affected by imprisonment. This may be through individual or group work approaches or through signposting to other agencies.	
We recognise that when a parent goes into prison, this is often a time of crisis, particularly for children. We are ready to support children and families immediately.	
We recognise the stigma and isolation that families affected by imprisonment may experience and actively work to counter this.	
A named staff member has responsibility for being a resource for staff and families in relation to the impact of imprisonment and practical information.	
We recognise the direct experience of loss and confusion that many children may experience as a result of a family imprisonment. If appropriate, we will talk directly with children about this. We will also support parents to talk with children and give them appropriate information.	
A resource pack of local and national agencies which can provide additional support for this group of families is kept by our service and regularly updated.	
We link with other services in our area to provide information for prisons and other offender management services about how families affected by imprisonment can access our services.	
We monitor the number of referrals relating to families affected by imprisonment and the use made of the service by families in this situation.	



Section five:
**Information
and resources**

Section five: Information and resources

This section gives information about practicalities around imprisonment which will be useful for Families First staff working at the various stages of a parent's 'journey' through the prison system.

Our experience with parents affected by imprisonment indicates that they particularly value support workers who can advise or signpost them in relation to the practicalities of having a family member in prison and sources of support.

Practicalities

Advising a family about finding which prison someone is in

For court appearances in the last few days, ring the courts and ask to speak to the cells, who will be able to tell you which prison the family member went to.

If the family member has been in prison for some time, or has been transferred to another prison, contact the Prisoner Location Service. They will only take queries in writing or by email, and this can take about two weeks as the prisoner will be asked if they are happy for you to know where they are.

Prisoner Location Service, PO Box 2152, Birmingham, B15 1SD

Email:
prisoner.location.service@noms.gsi.gov.uk

Finding information about specific prisons

Information about specific prisons (such as contact details and visiting information) can be found by searching for the prison on the Ministry of Justice website: www.justice.gov.uk/contacts/prison-finder

Visits

It should be possible to visit a prisoner within 48 hours of a court appearance –

unless the court appearance was immediately before a weekend.

If someone is unconvicted and on remand, they are allowed three hour-long visits a week.

A convicted prisoner is allowed at least two hour-long visits every four weeks. Up to three adults and any number of children can visit a prisoner at one time.

Each prison is different and some will allow more visits. It is best to ask the prison directly what their rules are.

Prisoners on remand (unconvicted) do not need to send a visiting order, but will usually need to let the prison know the details of any visitors (name, address, date of birth, relationship to prisoner) before a visit can be booked.

To visit a convicted prisoner, the prisoner will need to send a visiting order, with all the names of the people who are going to visit. This should have the prison's visit booking phone number on it, which the family will need to ring to arrange a visit.

In the first few days of being sent to prison, convicted prisoners are allowed one 'reception visit'. You do not need a visiting order for this, but you will still need to book your visit by phoning the prison, and you should say that you are booking a 'reception visit' when you do so.

Assisted Prison Visits Scheme

If a family is on a low income or on certain benefits (income support, employment and support allowance, income-based jobseeker's allowance, tax credit² or pension credit) they may be able to get financial help with the cost of prison visits. Close relatives, partners, sole visitors or the escort of a child or young person are eligible to claim assistance, which can cover costs of public transport, mileage (if using your own car), car hire, parking, overnight accommodation and childcare costs.

² These will be replaced by a universal credit in October 2013.

They will need to fill out an application form. This can be obtained by contacting:

Assisted Prison Visits Unit, PO Box 2152, Birmingham, B15 1SD

Tel: 0300 063 2100

Email: assisted.prison.visits@noms.gsi.gov.uk³

General information about assisted visits can be found by searching 'APVU customer guide' at www.justice.gov.uk⁴

Phone calls and letters

It is not possible to phone prisoners. However, prisoners are able to make phone calls out. They must give the prison a list of people they wish to call, to be approved. They can then use the phone, usually at set times – these times depend on each prison.

Prisoners need to buy credit to spend on phone calls, but if they have enough credit and there are available phones, they can make as many calls as they like. Mobile phones are not allowed in prisons. Phone calls may be recorded for security reasons.

There is no limit to the number of letters that can be sent to someone in prison. They will be opened by the prison to check that there is nothing in them that is not allowed. Sometimes they might be read by the prison for security reasons.

Prisoners can send as many letters out as they wish if they can pay for stamps, envelopes and paper themselves (bought from the prison shop). Convicted prisoners are given one free letter a week, and prisoners on remand are given two free letters a week.

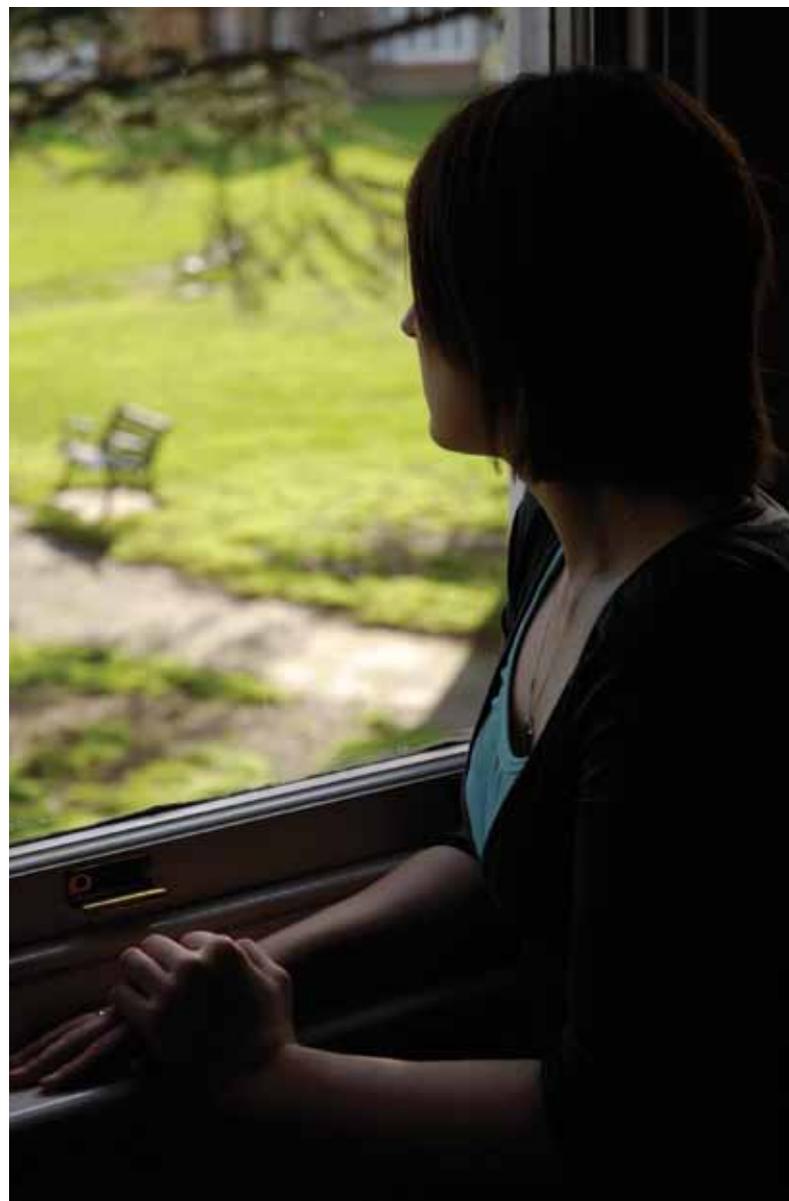
Emailing prisoners

It is possible to send an email to a prisoner – the email doesn't go straight to the prisoner but is printed by staff, put in an envelope and delivered to prisoners with the rest of their mail. This costs 30p per email and is likely to be only slightly quicker than writing a letter. To do this go to www.emailaprisoner.com.

The FAQ section of the website explains how to pay for it.

Welfare benefits

Child Poverty Action Group's (CPAG) welfare benefits and tax credit handbook has current information about benefits and tax credit regulations relevant for prisoners and the families of prisoners. See <http://www.cpag.org.uk/bookshop/wbtch>



³ Also available at the time of writing from www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/contacts/noms/assisted-prison-visits/apv-form.pdf

⁴ The address at the time of writing is www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/contacts/noms/assisted-prison-visits/assisted-prison-visits.pdf

Support organisations for families of prisoners

Action for Prisoners' Families (APF)

APF runs Family Voices, which aims to increase families' ability to influence policy and practice at a local and national level. They also provide information, advice and training to members (free to join).

Address: **Unit 21, Carlson Court, 116 Putney Bridge Road, London, SW15 2NQ**
Tel: **020 8812 3600**
Email: **info@prisonersfamilies.org.uk**
Web: **www.prisonersfamilies.org.uk**

Clinks

Clinks supports the voluntary and community sector working with offenders in England and Wales. It produces a directory of offender services which allows anyone to search on the type of service, who it is targeted at and where it operates. www.clinks.org

Offenders' Families Helpline

Offenders' Families Helpline offers information and support for families from arrest through to release and beyond. Their website has information sheets that provide straightforward information and guidance on a number of issues, from visits to transfers to explanations of sentences and conditions. Their free helpline is open every day.

Address: **1079 Rochdale Road, Manchester, M9 8AJ**
Freephone helpline: **0808 808 2003**
Email: **info@offendersfamilieshelpline.org**
Web: **www.offendersfamilieshelpline.org**

Ormiston Children and Families Trust

Ormiston works in the East of England and offers advice and support to families. They also run visitor centres and children's play areas, put on children's visits and run parenting courses for dads in prison. They also provide a range of literature aimed at supporting families of prisoners.

Address: **333 Felixstowe Road, Ipswich, IP3 9BU**
Tel: **01473 724517**
Email: **enquiries@ormiston.org**
Web: **www.ormiston.org**

Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT)

PACT provides emotional and practical support to families and prisoners, runs visitors' centres outside prisons and children's play services in prison visit halls.

PACT also has a booklet, *My visit*, which explains the visiting experience to children using illustrations and easy-to-understand words, with spaces for children to draw pictures with their mum or dad. Order at www.prisonadvice.org.uk/whatwedo?q=myvisitchildrensbooklet

Address: **Park Place, 12 Lawn Lane, Vauxhall, London, SW8 1UD**
Tel: **020 7735 9535**
Email: **info@prisonadvice.org.uk**
Web: **www.prisonadvice.org.uk**

Parenting Matters

Parenting Matters has developed a number of resources for prisoners and their families including *It's a tough time for everyone*, a booklet and DVD to help children come to terms with their parent's imprisonment, and *Family ties - information for when a mum is in prison*.

Tel: **028 90491 081**
Email: **niparenting.matters@barnardos.org.uk**

Prison Chat UK

Prison Chat UK is an online community that gives support to families and friends of prisoners. Their website provides information and is a place to connect with others in a similar position and share advice, experiences and support. www.prisonchat.com

Prison Reform Trust – Advice and Information Service

The Advice and Information Service will provide information on prison rules and procedures, prisoners' rights and how to get help in prison. They also have a freephone line for prisoners.

Address: **15 Northburgh Street,
London, EC1V 0JR**
Freephone line for prisoners:
0808 802 0060
Tel: **0207 251 5070**
Email: **adviceandinformation@
prisonreformtrust.org.uk**
Web: **www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk**

Storybook Dads

Storybook Dads gives imprisoned parents the opportunity to record a story which is then given to their children on CD. They work in over 90 prisons in the UK.

Address: **Storybook Dads, HMP Dartmoor,
Princetown, Yelverton,
Devon, PL20 6RR**
Tel: **01822 322287**
Email: **info@storybookdads.org.uk**
Web: **www.storybookdads.org.uk**

Support organisations specifically for women involved with the criminal justice system

The Griffins Society – Women’s Information Network

Their website has information about resources and projects to support women affected by the criminal justice system. Their online database can be searched to find local services that may be relevant for women, such as housing, grants, counselling and childcare.

Tel: **07879 630802**
Web: **www.thegriffinssociety.org/win.html**

Women in Prison

Women in Prison offers support, advice and information for women affected by the criminal justice system and professionals working with them. They can help directly with employment, education and training advice and access to funding for educational courses and materials, as well as directing to other specialist agencies. They also offer

parenting support – specifically, supporting women and children to deal with the impact of separation due to imprisonment.

If you wish to refer someone to
Women in Prison:

**Women in Prison,
Freepost RSLB-UABE-TYRT,
Unit 10, The Ivories, 6 Northampton
Street, London, N1 2HY**

Freephone advice line for women:

0800 953 0125

Tel: **020 7359 6674**

Email: **admin@womeninprison.org.uk**

Web: **www.womeninprison.org.uk**

Women’s Breakout

Women’s Breakout is the representative body for a national network of women-centred services offering community alternatives to custody for women. See **www.womensbreakout.org.uk**

Training material suitable for use by children’s centres

Action for Prisoners’ Families

has produced a DVD *Homeward bound* (2006). Although this is based on a family situation involving a child aged over five, it powerfully captures the tensions in a family as the father is about to be released from prison.

They have also produced *Danny’s Mum* and *Tommy’s Dad*, books about having a parent in prison. They also have a list of useful resources for practitioners. See **www.prisonersfamilies.org.uk**

Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE)

(2008) Children of prisoners: maintaining family ties (Guide 22); also, e-learning (including online guides) e.g.: *Children of prisoners, an introduction, The pathway from arrest to release and Approaches to practice with children of prisoners*.

See **www.scie.org.uk/topic/people/childreneyoungpeople/childrenofprisoners** and **www.scie.org.uk/publications/elearning/childrenofprisoners/index.asp**

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Further copies of this handbook are available from:

Barnardo's Cymru Policy and Research Unit
Barnardo's Cymru South West Wales Office
1st Floor 4a Queen Street, Neath SA11 1DL,
Phone: 01639 620 945, Fax: 01639 620 941

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***Family support for children
and families affected by
imprisonment:
A handbook for Families First
services in Wales***

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