

THE LINK

FAMILIES AFFECTED BY

IMPRISONMENT

How Does Having a Family Member in Prison Affect Children and Families?

Compared to their peers, children face significant pressures and emotional upheaval during the period of a family member's imprisonment and have a greater likelihood of a range of poor outcomes, and of facing impoverished and damaging lives. This short video highlights one child's story and the impact that her stepfather's imprisonment had on her: <https://www.prisonadvice.org.uk>
 Also See: <http://www.barnardos.org.uk>

Intergenerational offending is a big problem: a landmark study found that 65% of boys who had a father in custody go on to offend themselves.
 See more: <https://vimeo.com> The imprisonment of a mother also has lasting consequences for children and only 5% of children with a mother in prison remain in their own home. Significantly, all of North Wales' women in custody are held in England.

Families, generally, are more likely to experience poverty and debt and feel stigmatised in their communities; the children tend to feel more isolated in schools. This also affects children and families who have a parent or family member involved elsewhere in the criminal justice system, not just in prison.

Welcome ...

... to this first edition of a newsletter that aims to highlight the issues faced by North Wales' children and families affected by the imprisonment of a family member. It is believed that significant numbers of North Wales' children and families are affected. However, very often, their unique vulnerabilities and challenges are overlooked or hidden and they end up serving a so-called 'hidden sentence' themselves.

This newsletter will raise awareness of their specific issues and needs so that, as professional bodies and agencies, we can undertake preventative work and provide more targeted support and services to this hidden group in our society.

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HMP Berwyn Family Work



This newsletter has been prepared on behalf of the North Wales Safer Communities Board, Area Planning Board & HMP Berwyn.



Children and Families Affected by Imprisonment: A 'Hidden' Group

Estimates suggest that 200,000 children in England and Wales have a parent in prison. This is twice the figure for children affected by divorce. Unfortunately, there is no official measure for identifying these children and families, little awareness of their specific needs and no systematic support. Such uncertainty means that, generally, the services and support that they could benefit from, is often not available to them. They are also unlikely to reveal themselves for fear of

social stigma and bullying and so remain hidden from local services. Read a recent debate in Westminster Hall: <https://www.theyworkforyou.com>

Official sources, however, indicate that 7% of children experience a 'parent' being imprisoned during their school years. On this basis, approx. 7,105 children during their school years could be affected by this issue in North Wales.

'Parental Incarceration' as a Significant Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE)

Did you know that 'parental incarceration' has been classed as one of the 11 Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) identified amongst the Welsh adult population by Public Health Wales (2018)?

As collective childhood stressors, ACEs can create long-term harm into adulthood affecting mental, physical and social wellbeing. The first two years, including pregnancy (or the First 1000 Days) are particularly key in a child's development. If an individual has four or more ACEs, the research has found that he/she is 20 times more likely to be imprisoned.

Read more: <http://bit.ly/22zwYGs>

An ACE Support Hub (Cymru Well Wales) has therefore been established. For further information, please email: ace@wales.nhs.uk.

This short film gives a feel for the potential of ACEs to damage lifetime health and the roles that different agencies can play in preventing them and supporting those affected by them: <http://www.aces.me.uk/in-wales/>.

Children with a parent in prison:

- are twice as likely to experience conduct and mental health problems;
- are less likely to do well at school and more likely to be excluded;
- are three times more likely to be a perpetrator or victim of domestic violence;
- are four times more likely to become dependent on drugs; and
- cost the public purse ten times more by the age of 28.



DID YOU KNOW?

500 children visit HMP Parc in Bridgend, South Wales per week to see family members.



THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY TIES FOR PEOPLE IN CUSTODY

Supportive relationships with family members give meaning and motivation to those in custody, supporting them in their rehabilitation and resettlement.

See more:

<https://www.dropbox.com>

A 2008 survey found that offenders who had received at least one visit during their time in custody were 39% less likely to re-offend than those that had received no visits. Currently, 44% of adults are reconvicted within one year of release.

However, families can very often be deterred from visiting due to the stigma, the lack of welcoming facilities at a prison, fear about what to expect etc. Much can be done in the prison environment to change this; established prisons like HMP Parc in South Wales are leading the way as well as some prisons in England and Scotland. See more about HMP Parc's work and the Scottish Experience:

<https://www.channel4.com>

<https://www.youtube.com>

DID YOU KNOW?

- An estimated 200,000 children in England and Wales have a parent in prison
- Circa 35,000 children are affected by the imprisonment of a sibling
- 65% of boys who have a father in custody go on to offend themselves
- 59% of men in prison have children under the age of 18

*Parc Supporting Families project,
HMP Parc, Bridgend*

Landmark 'Lord Farmer' Review Places Family Ties at Heart of Prison Reform

Research has shown that close ties between prisoners and key family members can significantly reduce the risk of reoffending. Reoffending costs society, on average, £15 billion every year.

A landmark study was therefore commissioned by the UK government to investigate how connecting prisoners with their families could improve offender wellbeing and reduce reoffending. The August 2017 report by Lord Farmer concluded that

family relationships are "the golden thread" to help turn people away from crime and support families to cope. A strategy is now being prepared to take forward the recommendations.

Read the report at:

<https://www.gov.uk>



A Collaborative North Wales Project to Help Families Affected by Imprisonment

In order to raise awareness of the issues faced by these North Wales families and to drive change to encourage prevention work and more targeted support, ten public bodies from across the region and HMP Berwyn, have recently appointed a small regional cross-cutting team; this is part of the work of the North Wales Safer Communities Board.

<http://www.northwales-pcc.gov.uk>

There are two officers within the team: Sara Kettle and Catherine Pritchard, who will work collaboratively with partners. A Programme Steering Group has been established to drive their work. If you wish to contact Sara or Catherine about their work and can support and inform it going forward, please contact them on:

sara.kettle@wrexham.gov.uk / 01978 292453 or catherine.pritchard@wrexham.gov.uk / 01978 292444.

Maybe you collate figures on the numbers of children or families from North Wales affected by this issue? Or you have a specific understanding of their needs through the work that you do day-to-day?

Perhaps you provide support to families affected by Imprisonment? If so, they'd like to hear from you.



HMP Berwyn opened in February 2017 in Wrexham and is the only prison in North Wales. This is crucial in maintaining and developing family ties for North Wales' men in custody there. HMP Berwyn recognises the vital importance of supporting the men in their care to repair, maintain and improve their relationships with their families while they are serving their custodial sentence, where this is possible. According to Joanna Marston, Head of Reducing Reoffending: "Men who have positive and supportive relationships with their families are significantly less likely to reoffend after release and men who are having positive contact with their families during their sentence are also likely to be of better behaviour"

There is a specialist family community at Berwyn called 'Families First'

which can house up to 88 men who want to repair, maintain or improve their relationships with their family, whether that be with children, parents, siblings, partners etc. The men on 'Families First' undertake family-based courses and interventions run on the community, as well as having priority to undertake family/parenting courses in the college and elsewhere in the prison. Read more about HMP Berwyn's family work in future newsletters.

However, North Wales' women and young offenders are still held outside the region, mainly in the English secure estate, making improving and sustaining family relationships more difficult. It is therefore even more important for agencies to effectively work to support these people from North Wales.

HMP Berwyn: Visitors' first experience of the prison - reception and the visits hall

Training

Did you know that a 'Hidden Sentence' Training programme is available for professionals who come into contact with the children and families of those in custody? The courses are delivered by various organisations to individuals or groups by experienced trainers. They aim to raise awareness and give an overview of issues which prisoners' families routinely face and provide strategies and resources to help trainees support these families.

Currently, each Local Authority in North Wales has a small budget to provide this, initially for Families First and Flying Start staff. If you are interested, please contact the regional team above.

For further information about the work, please contact: sara.kettle@wrexham.gov.uk / 01978 292453 or catherine.pritchard@wrexham.gov.uk / 01978 292444.