

Children of Prisoners

Fixing a broken system

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About Crest

Crest Advisory is an independent consultancy, specialising in criminal justice and policing. We provide analytical, policy and communications support to organisations who share our mission: **building safer and stronger communities.**

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The Centre for Health and Justice at the Institute of Mental Health University of Nottingham seeks to discover the best ways to deliver healthcare in the justice environment and secure health settings. It brings together research, policy, and practice in the fields of mental and general health care and criminal justice.

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Foreword



Throughout my career, I have sought out issues that are filed under ‘too difficult to deal with’: issues that make some policymakers shift uncomfortably in their chair and nod vaguely in the direction of ‘someone else’s responsibility’.

The plight of children of prisoners is one such issue.

When the criminal justice system and the courts put a parent in prison, it generates problems for the child(ren), family members, schools and children’s services. But the two arms of the state don’t speak to each other. There is no system to facilitate communication between the courts which sentence people and bodies with responsibilities for children. It is not beyond the wit of public services to join the dots, and the impact on the welfare of children would be profound were they to do so.

Custody is necessary and important for public protection, including where the family themselves are the victims of a parent’s crimes. There are circumstances where the child’s welfare necessitates their separation from that parent. But when that is not the case, it should not be so hard for children and their families to survive the effects of parental imprisonment.

The parent left behind, normally the mother, is left to deal with the consequences — explaining what’s happened to the children (or asking them to keep it quiet), then to the school; trying to keep their heads above water, and managing the impact on the children of losing a parent suddenly. She may fear seeking help due to worries about losing her children to the care system. Families can themselves feel punished and blamed for the parent’s crime.

A communication from the court to the council’s children’s services is not the whole story, but could be a simple way of lessening the chances of a family struggling to cope on their own.

A focus on the children left behind would also help break the intergenerational cycle of crime. The evidence of poor outcomes for children of prisoners is stark: they are, in many cases, condemned to follow in their parent’s footsteps — 65% of sons of prisoners end up in the criminal justice system themselves with all the attendant social and economic costs. These children should be on the radar of public services with professionals checking in with families, ensuring needs are identified and met, targeting support to those most at risk.

Crest’s report is a huge help for policy-makers for three reasons:

- It looks at the issue of parental imprisonment from the point of view of children and child- and family-focused services, rather than the offender and criminal justice system.
- Crest’s methodology estimates that 312,000 children are affected by parental imprisonment each year, a number way in excess of the estimate that has been in use for over a decade now, and taking the changes in the prison population and the profile of that population into account.
- It makes recommendations for a national strategy for the children of prisoners: a proper communication mechanism between the courts and local early help and safeguarding services is a starting point for a comprehensive approach aimed at breaking the cycle of intergenerational offending.

This report makes it clear that action is needed and makes straightforward recommendations about that action. I hope that the children whose parents are in custody can look forward to a better future because of it.

Dame Louise Casey DBE CB
www.crestadvisory.com

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1

Executive summary

Children of prisoners are at risk of significantly worse outcomes than children not affected by parental imprisonment. These include, amongst others, an increased risk of future offending, mental health issues, and poor educational attainment.¹⁻⁵ The extent to which parental imprisonment is a specific and independent risk factor is contested. Nonetheless, recent research shows that parental imprisonment is associated with a fivefold increase in exposure to other adverse childhood experiences.⁶

Despite such findings, children of prisoners remain an ‘invisible’ group – currently, children are not systematically identified or assessed when a parent goes to prison. As a result, there is no record of who, or even how many of these children there are. Currently used estimations, based on data from 2008, put the number of children of prisoners in England and Wales at 200,000. However, new Crest research (see chapter 3 of the report) shows that there are significantly more children – an estimated **312,000** – affected by parental imprisonment than previously thought. This has profound implications for the development of sufficient and appropriate services for children of prisoners.



¹ Farrington, D. P., Barnes, G. C., & Lambert, S. (1996). The concentration of offending in families. *Legal and criminological psychology*, 1(1), 47-63.

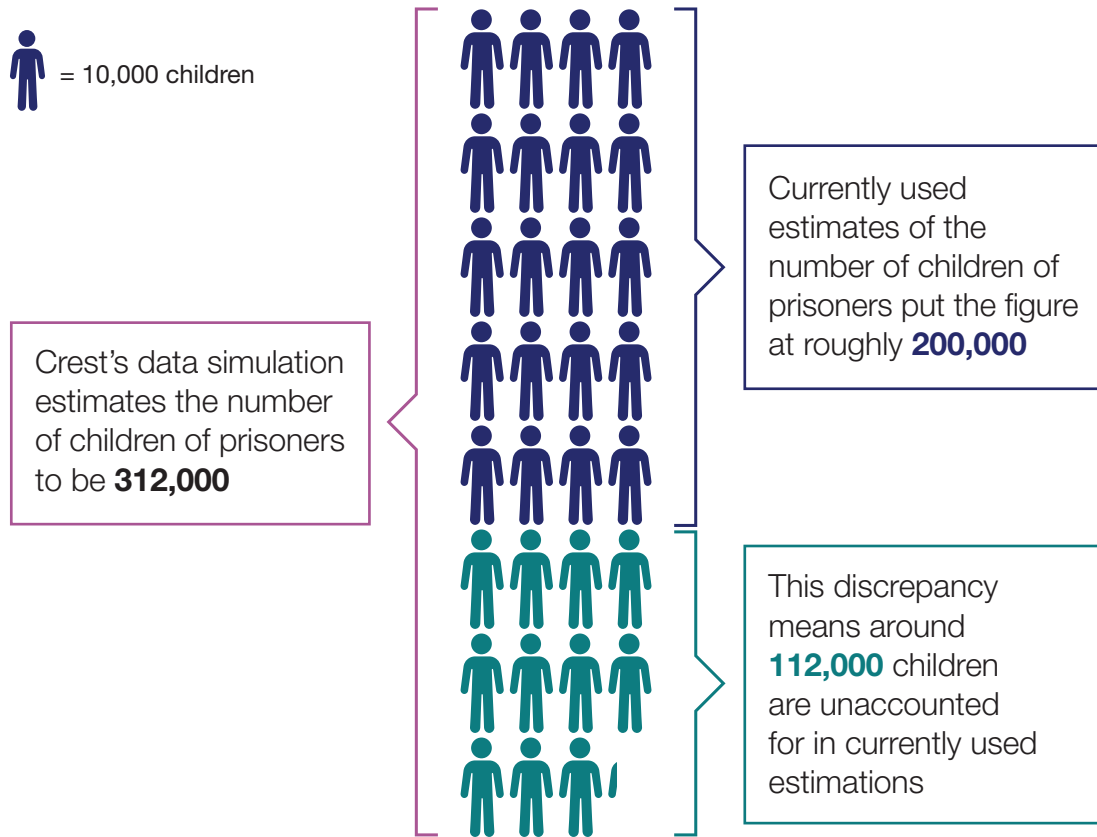
² Murray, J. (2003). *Fathers in Prison*. University of Cambridge: Institute of Criminology.

³ Loureiro, T. (2010). *Perspectives of children and young people with a parent in prison*. Edinburgh: SCCYP.

⁴ Rakt, M. V. D., Murray, J., & Nieuwbeerta, P. (2012). The long-term effects of paternal imprisonment on criminal trajectories of children. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 49(1), 81-108.

⁵ Comfort, M., Nurse, A. M., McKay, T., & Kramer, K. (2011). Taking children into account. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 10(3), 839-850.

⁶ Turney, K. (2018). Adverse childhood experiences among children of incarcerated parents. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 89, 218-225.



Current policy landscape and provision for children of prisoners

That parental imprisonment is of itself an adverse experience, associated with additional disadvantages for children affected, suggests that a parent going to prison should be a red flag for services to ensure the wellbeing and support needs of the child or children in that family are addressed. However, no such red flag currently exists.

Information gathering and assessments are undertaken at numerous points during offenders' journeys through the criminal justice system. However, information relating to the families of offenders is collected inconsistently, for different purposes and is not used in any systematic way neither to understand the wider family picture nor to engage with services who are best placed to support families while the family member is in prison.

Provision for prisoners and their families is largely provided by the voluntary and community sector. There are many excellent family services working in custody and in prison visitors' centres to support families and ensure prisoners and families are able to stay in touch. Lord Farmer's review⁷ and the Government's response have the potential to change the prison landscape to create a greater family focus, making Governors responsible for a family and significant others strategy in every prison.

⁷ Farmer, L. (2017). *The Importance of Strengthening Prisoners' Family Ties to Prevent Reoffending and Reduce Intergenerational Crime*. London: Ministry of Justice.

However, this is only one part of the picture. Whilst a family member is in custody, children have to cope on the outside with all the attendant practical and emotional problems, such as the impact of losing a parent (sometimes without notice), the family's loss of income, and sometimes the loss of their home. This may happen without explanation – frequently, children are not told what has happened, or are instructed to keep it a secret due to shame or stigma. Visiting a parent may mean long journeys to a strange place, to spend an hour or two with a parent who is unable to get out of their seat, resulting in unauthorised absences from school and a subsequent impact on attainment.

On the 'outside' (i.e. community based services) dedicated services for families in this situation are harder to come by. There is no national guidance around recognising children of prisoners as a distinct group of children in need, and the absence of any mechanism to notify schools or the local authority when a parent enters custody will in most cases mean that the event goes unnoticed. Instead, the system unduly relies on children and parents self-identifying to services. For many families, this is the last thing they want to do as there is a widespread perception that this could mean children going into care. As a result, in most cases help arrives only in response to the manifestation of distress or difficulty such as the behaviour of a child, absence from school or threatened eviction. We spoke to services operating on the 'outside' as part of this research, who highlighted the significant challenges of piecing together a whole family view that encompasses the family on the outside as well as the parent on the inside, and in engaging criminal justice services in building that picture.

The case for change

Whilst progress has been made in recognising the value of maintaining family ties for the offender, there is much more that needs to be done to both recognise, and realise, the mutual benefits of maintaining and strengthening ties for an offender's family and children. Maintaining family ties is not only predictive of more successful desistance from offending, but also improves outcomes for children of offenders. A whole family, holistic approach is a win-win situation both within and outside the criminal justice system. However, the current system does not provide any shared objectives to facilitate the joint working that is required to provide a coordinated, whole family approach.

This is not the first attempt to highlight the position of children of prisoners: a good deal of research has been carried out demonstrating the significant disadvantages suffered by this group. Much of this has been through an offender/prison lens; there has been less work exploring the merits of a whole family approach, which takes into account the needs and circumstances of the family on the outside and the prisoner when delivering interventions.

Moreover, this report includes revised estimates of the number of children of prisoners, reflecting the size of the prison population as it is today and forecasts figures going forward. It recognises that this population is significantly bigger than previous estimates, which should be a wake-up call to policymakers, both nationally and locally. All relevant agencies should recognise the value of reducing parents' risk of reoffending, and their children's risk of future offending, by investing in a whole family approach.

We argue these children should be a priority for services that target children and families with multiple and complex needs, for example, early help, children in need, troubled families and social care services.

The opportunity

The point of sentencing represents an opportunity for services to ensure the well-being of the family left behind. It is a point when one arm of public services (the courts and criminal justice services) makes a decision that is of interest to another part of public services (children's services). HM Courts should inform the relevant local authority when they have sentenced a parent to custody.

Building a 'prompt' in the form of a notification system into our public service infrastructure is of course only part of the picture. From there we need to ensure that the needs and circumstances of the family left behind are identified and build the evidence base for the interventions that work best to build resilience in children and families. Building effective partnerships between prisons, local authorities and probation services and their voluntary sector partners which can overcome the prison walls in order to develop whole family approaches that nurture family ties will also be vital.

These are golden opportunities not only to reduce reoffending for adults but to halt the cycle of intergenerational offending and improve outcomes for children.

This is a child welfare and a crime prevention opportunity which we are currently wasting.

Aims of the report

Overall, this report aims to improve understanding of:

- **Who this 'invisible' group of children is**
- **The extent, nature and root causes of their poorer outcomes**
- **How a whole family approach can be used to improve outcomes for children and parents and what needs to change**

The final chapter of this report outlines our recommendations to the criminal justice system, to funders and to local authorities and schools on the ‘outside’ about what needs to change. We recommend a cross-government strategy for the care and support of children of prisoners to implement the following:

Recommendation 1.

A new set of arrangements that require courts to notify the relevant local authority when a parent is sentenced to custody.

Recommendation 2.

Joint protocols between local authorities, prisons and probation services to address the needs of prisoners’ families based on an assessment of the needs of the children.

Recommendation 3.

Courts should satisfy themselves that they have taken reasonable steps to identify where a convicted person has dependent children.

Recommendation 4.

Revision of CRC and NPS contracts to include a greater emphasis on family support and the importance of working jointly with local authorities to ensure children are safeguarded.

Recommendation 5.

Drive forward reform in prisons in line with the Farmer review’s recommendations.

Recommendation 6.

Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to develop justice devolution arrangements that aim to improve outcomes for children of prisoners, framed around reducing intergenerational offending.

Recommendation 7.

A £20M Prevention of Intergenerational Offending fund to support the rollout of a national strategy.

2

The context

Background

Children of incarcerated parents are often described as victims of a ‘hidden sentence’. A majority of offenders are parents, and 54% have children under 18 when they enter custody.⁸ Some 7% of children will experience their parent’s imprisonment during their time at school, and some 45% of prisoners lose contact with their family whilst in prison.⁸

Children with a parent in prison often have poorer outcomes in education and health, have a high probability of growing up in poverty and disadvantage, are at an increased risk for antisocial and delinquent behaviour, and may have a variety of complex behavioural and emotional needs.⁹ A child’s own risk of involvement with the criminal justice system is increased as a result of parental imprisonment, with studies showing over two thirds of prisoners’ sons go on to offend themselves.¹⁰ Children are often riddled with anger, grief, and rejection, but find it difficult to express these feelings, and often keep their parent’s imprisonment a secret from others around them.^{11,12} Stigma and shame extend even further, as parental imprisonment is often kept secret within families. Some families tell their child they are visiting their parent’s workplace when visiting them in prison.¹³

There is no systematic identification of children of prisoners, which make estimations of their number difficult. The lack of coordinated efforts in identifying this group of children and their hidden nature also means that they are not only socially isolated and disadvantaged, but their needs are not known and so they may lack the right help, they may be at risk of unsuitable care arrangements, and can face a host of negative effects in their young lives that, research indicates, extends far into the future in a cycle of intergenerational disadvantage or crime. This is despite the fact that parental imprisonment presents a distinct opportunity for early intervention.

⁸ Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, National Offender Management Service (NOMS), Policis, Kingston University and Toynbee Hall. (2014). *Parenting and Relationship Support Programmes for Offenders and Their Families*. London: Policis.

⁹ Murray, J., Farrington, D. P., Sekol, I., Olsen, R. F., & Murray, J. (2009). Effects of parental imprisonment on child antisocial behaviour and mental. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, 4, 1-105.

¹⁰ Farrington, D. P., Barnes, G. C., & Lambert, S. (1996). The concentration of offending in families. *Legal and criminological psychology*, 1(1), 47-63.

¹¹ Boswell, G. and Wedge, P. (2002). *Imprisoned fathers and their Children*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

¹² Nesmith, A., and Ruhland, E. (2008) Children of incarcerated parents: Challenges and resiliency, in their own words. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 30(10), 1119–30.

¹³ Evans, J. (2015). *Locked out: Children’s Experiences of Visiting a Parent in Prison*. Essex: Barnardo’s.

The effects on children of parental incarceration

A substantial body of research highlights the negative effects parental incarceration has on children. Children with a parent in prison are twice as likely compared to other children to experience conduct and mental health problems; are less likely to do well at school; and are more likely to be arrested and imprisoned themselves in later years.¹⁴⁻¹⁷

Seventy-one percent of boys who experienced parental imprisonment during childhood had antisocial personalities at age 32, compared to only 19% of boys who were not separated and whose parents never went to prison.¹⁸ Other studies also show that around 30% of prisoners' children experience significant mental health problems compared to 10% of the general population.^{19,20} Studies asking adult caregivers about the effect of parental imprisonment on their children, have reported behavioural problems including being angry, upset, naughty, confused, withdrawn detached or depressed, as well as experiencing problems with bullying and academic underachievement.²¹⁻²⁴

Comparisons between the childhood experiences of general population children and those of current prisoners reveal strong inter-generational patterns. Current prisoners are disproportionately shown to have a background of family breakdown, poor nurturing, childhood abuse and trauma.²⁵ Among those in custody, 27% were in care as a child, with 41% reporting to have observed domestic violence in the home, and 29% themselves experiencing emotional, sexual, or physical abuse as a child.²⁵ Thirty-seven percent of prisoners reported having family members who had been convicted of a non-motoring criminal offence, of whom 84% had been in prison, a young offenders' institution or borstal.²⁶

In terms of education, 59% of prisoners stated they regularly truanted from school; 63% had been suspended or temporarily excluded; and 42% stated that they had been permanently excluded or expelled.²⁶

Prisoners who reported issues at school, abuse, observed violence as a child, or had a convicted family member were all more likely to be reconvicted in the year after release than those who did not.²⁶

¹⁴ Murray, J. (2003). *Fathers in Prison*. University of Cambridge: Institute of Criminology.

¹⁵ Loureiro, T. (2010). *Perspectives of children and young people with a parent in prison*. Edinburgh: SCCYP.

¹⁶ Rakt, M. V. D., Murray, J., & Nieuwbeerta, P. (2012). The long-term effects of paternal imprisonment on criminal trajectories of children. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 49(1), 81-108.

¹⁷ Comfort, M., Nurse, A. M., McKay, T., & Kramer, K. (2011). Taking children into account. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 10(3), 839-850.

¹⁸ Murray, J., & Farrington, D. P. (2005). Parental imprisonment: effects on boys' antisocial behaviour and delinquency through the life course. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 46(12), 1269-1278.

¹⁹ Farrington, D. P., Barnes, G. C., & Lambert, S. (1996). The concentration of offending in families. *Legal and criminological psychology*, 1(1), 47-63.

²⁰ Social Exclusion Unit (2002). *Reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners*. London: Cabinet Office.

²¹ Caddle, D. and Crisp, D. (1997). *Imprisoned women and mothers*. Home Office Research Study 162. London: Home Office.

²² Murray, J., & Farrington, D. P. (2005). Parental imprisonment: effects on boys' antisocial behaviour and delinquency through the life course. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 46(12), 1269-1278.

²³ Poehlmann, J. (2005). Representations of Attachment Relationships in Children of Incarcerated Mother. *Child Development*, 76(3), 679-96.

²⁴ Sharp, S. F., Marcus-Mendoza, S. T., Bentley, R. G., Simpson, D. B., & Love, S. R. (1997). Gender differences in the impact of incarceration on the children and families of drug offenders. *Journal of the Oklahoma Criminal Justice Research Consortium Volume 4*, 1998.

²⁵ Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, National Offender Management Service (NOMS), Policis, Kingston University and Toynbee Hall. (2014). *Parenting and Relationship Support Programmes for Offenders and Their Families*. London: Policis.

²⁶ Williams, K., Papadopoulou, V., & Booth, N. (2012). *Prisoners' childhood and family backgrounds: Results from the Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction (SPCR) longitudinal cohort study of prisoners*. London: Ministry of Justice.

Parental imprisonment as an adverse childhood experience

Parental imprisonment is acknowledged as an adverse childhood experience (ACE), and the research literature on its association with negative outcomes is growing. ACEs are stressful or traumatic experiences that happen in childhood which can have a profound negative effect on individuals in adulthood, including on their learning, behaviour and health if left unresolved.

A recent study which examined the relationship between parental imprisonment and other ACEs²⁷ showed that children who experienced parental imprisonment were more likely to have experienced other ACEs than children who had not experienced parental imprisonment – specifically, parental imprisonment was associated with a fivefold increase in exposure to ACEs. These differences remained when demographic and socioeconomic factors were controlled for.

The results of this study showed that black children experienced the highest number of ACEs of the cohort, followed by children of mixed heritage. BAME offenders are overrepresented within the prison population at every age group in (particularly 18-24 year olds who represent 33% of the adult prison population in England and Wales).²⁸ The study also looked at age as a demographic characteristic and found that the association between ACEs and parental imprisonment was stronger among younger children compared with older children.

Children affected by parental imprisonment also tend to be disproportionately exposed to other ACEs. However, the research does not tell us whether parental imprisonment causes other ACEs, or vice versa. It also does not confirm whether parental imprisonment is an independent and specific ACE, or in other words, the extent to which parental imprisonment affects children's outcomes independently of other ACEs.

Despite these limitations, the research evidence unequivocally demonstrates that children of prisoners are a particularly vulnerable group who are likely to require support and help to mitigate the risks they are exposed to.

Maternal vs paternal imprisonment

There are a number of moderating factors which may affect children's reaction to parental imprisonment, such as the parent-child relationship before imprisonment; the quality of the child's relationships with other family and extended family members; individual characteristics such as resilience; and wider social factors such as socioeconomic status.²⁹

Another moderating factor is whether the mother or father is in custody. Despite a lack of research which directly compares differences in the experience of children having a father compared to a mother go to prison, the research literature nevertheless commonly suggests that the imprisonment of a mother is more damaging for a child's later outcomes than the imprisonment of a father.³⁰

²⁷ Turney, K. (2018). Adverse childhood experiences among children of incarcerated parents. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 89, 218-225.

²⁸ Prison Reform Trust. Bromley Briefings Prison Factfile: Autumn 2017. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/642551/david-lammy-economic-paper-short-summary.pdf.

²⁹ Murray, J., & Farrington, D. P. (2008). The effects of parental imprisonment on children. *Crime and Justice*, 37(1), 133-206.

³⁰ Kruttschnitt, C. (2010). The Paradox of Women's Imprisonment. *Daedalus*, 139(3), 32-42.

There may be a number of reasons driving this difference. Firstly, mothers in prison are more likely to be primary caregivers and are more likely to be sole parents than fathers in prison, meaning maternal incarceration is likely to have a more disruptive effect on children compared to paternal incarceration.^{31,32}

Ninety-five percent of children have to leave the family home as a result of maternal imprisonment, with 40% being cared for by grandparents, and a greater proportion are put into foster care compared to those affected by paternal imprisonment.³³ Having to move from the family home will often result in other disruptive changes such as changing schools, and having to form new social networks.

Female offenders are more likely to be held further from home than male offenders, making visiting difficult and expensive, which in turn has an adverse effect on maintaining family relationships. Whereas male offenders are on average held in prisons 50 miles from home, female offenders are held an average of 64 miles away, with many held at significantly further distances. For example, as there are no female prisons in Wales, 20% of women held in HMP Eastwood Park (the closest prison for female offenders from South Wales) are over 150 miles from their homes.³³

Practical and immediate impact on children and families

Not all children will react to losing a parent to custody in the same way. However, there are a number of commonalities in the ways that parental imprisonment directly impacts on children, as well as knock-on effects from the impact on their family in general. These include, but are not limited to:

Emotional impact

- Anger/loss/sadness at the loss of a family member, often unexpectedly
- Guilt or blame
- Confusion, particularly if the child has not been told that the parent has been sentenced to custody
- Worry or anxiety e.g. concern about the family member in prison, or concern for the other family member dealing with additional stress
- Sleep disturbances
- Not being able to express concerns or feelings
- Changes in behaviour
- Dealing with the remaining parent's changes in behaviour/parenting due to the emotional and practical impact on them
- Shame or isolation (compounded by the stigma of having a family member in prison, feeling there is nobody else in the same situation)

³¹ Murray, J., & Farrington, D. P. (2008). The effects of parental imprisonment on children. *Crime and Justice*, 37(1), 133-206.

³² Prison Reform Trust. (2018). What About Me? Available at: <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/portals/0/documents/what%20about%20me.pdf>

³³ Prison Reform Trust. (2017). Why focus on reducing women's imprisonment? Available at: <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/Women/whywomen.pdf>

“The kids were bullied quite a bit for their dad’s being in prison. I think that was mostly their downfall at school, comments they were getting from people and what have you. It made my children’s lives hell. So I had to take them out of school, put them in another school to still be harassed again.”³⁴

“So we’ve agreed that we’re comfortable with the white lie of daddy’s working away...Well, I am working away. The fact that I can’t come home is because there is a criminal conviction, they don’t need to know...It would be more upsetting for them to see me in here.”³⁴

■ Educational impact

- Taking time off school to visit a parent – school may not know and not authorise absence from school
- Loss of concentration, worsening of school attainment
- Deterioration in behaviour

■ Financial impact

- Loss of income
- Increased debt
- Cost of prison visits
- Benefit entitlements may change or stop if a parent is sent to prison
 - The prisoner’s partner must satisfy the benefit entitlement conditions in their own right/ as a single person to still be entitled to benefits when their partner goes to prison

³⁴ Policis (2014). Parenting and relationship support programmes for offenders and their families. Volume One: A review of the landscape. Available at: http://policis.com/pdf/moj/MOJ_BIS_Parenting_support_for_offenders_and_families_Volume_1_28014_FINAL.pdf

■ Practical impact

- Losing the family home (more likely if the child's mother goes to prison compared to their father)
 - Moving school
 - Loss of friendship networks
- Disruption of childcare routine
- Change in primary caregiver (more likely if the child's mother goes to prison)
- Stress of prison visits
 - Long journeys
 - Frightening setting, search/security
 - Not being able to interact normally with their parent (parent isn't able to get out of their chair)
 - Disappointment of cancelled visits

“You have to sit at the table and not allowed to touch each other and what have you, which I think is wrong, really, because all you want to do is just sit on their lap and just hug them the whole time you're there, do you know what I mean?³⁴”

Conclusions

The existing body of research looking into the outcomes of children of prisoners demonstrates that they are a particularly vulnerable group, with specific and complex needs. Despite such findings, they remain an 'invisible group', as there are no processes in place to systematically identify them at any point during their parent's criminal justice system journey.

Due to this, there are no up-to-date or accurate estimations of their number – the most commonly used estimate is 200,000,³⁵ however this is based on data from 2008, and the prison population has increased significantly since then.

The following chapter aims to address this particularly significant limitation – the lack of accurate estimations of the current number of children of prisoners in England and Wales. This information is crucial to understand the scale of the need, and the service provision required to improve outcomes for this group.



³⁵ Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction Survey. MoJ 2012, available at <http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/research-and-analysis/moj/results-from-the-surveying-prisoner-crime-reduction-spcr-survey>

3

How big is the problem?

Estimating the number of children with a parent in prison in England & Wales

Given the substantial amount of research showing that parental imprisonment is a significant developmental risk factor for children,³⁶ it is important to understand the scale of the need, particularly when developing sufficient and appropriate services or interventions to mitigate the risks.

Few studies have tackled this question directly by surveying prisoners, and many predate the year 2000. The more recent (c. 2008) estimates for England and Wales rely on one or two survey sources and generally provide a 'single' number, e.g. 200,000 (annual cumulative prevalence).

A better estimate is particularly needed given the background of continuing high levels of imprisonment.³⁷ Despite an overall fall in the number of crimes being committed, and fewer offenders coming before the courts, the prison population has roughly doubled since 1991.³⁸ The growth in the prison population is therefore likely to be associated with an increase in the number of children affected by parental imprisonment and updated estimates will need to reflect such trends.

To address this, Crest commissioned some further work based on new techniques that simulate the number of people going through the criminal justice system in England and Wales, to gain a better estimate and understanding of the scale of need for prisoners' children, updating the earlier 200,000 children estimate and projecting forward to the next decade.

³⁶ Murray, J., & Farrington, D. P. (2008). The Effects of Parental Imprisonment on Children. *Crime & Just.*, 37, 133-206.

³⁷ England and Wales has the highest imprisonment rate in western Europe at 145 per 100,000 population, and the prison population has risen by 82% (to 84,648) between 1986-2017. Source: Prison Reform Trust (2017). Prison: The Facts. Available at: <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/portals/0/documents/bromley%20briefings/summer%202017%20factfile.pdf>

³⁸ Prison Reform Trust. Bromley Briefings Prison Factfile: Autumn 2017. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/642551/david-lammy-economic-paper-short-summary.pdf

3 How big is the problem?

Summary of data simulation

The simulations are based on the Justice-Episteme³⁹ model of criminal justice dynamics. This incorporates a large number of factors including the size and age makeup of the general population from which offenders are drawn, and the range of criminal justice and other agencies whose work involves tackling crime. The model establishes a virtual population with gender, age and offending risk profiles, within which it is possible to identify those who have committed offences (as generated by the algorithms of the simulation) and to track what happens over time. The model incorporates many necessary simplifications, but crucially incorporates key variables and relationships that capture the essence of the behaviour and dynamics of the flows of offenders going through the criminal justice system, including those sent to prison.

This is therefore a powerful tool that can also be used to explore and analyse issues such as the number of children with a parent in prison, drawing on data relating to:

1. The proportion of prisoners with children
2. The number of children for each prisoner
3. The age distribution of the dependent children of prisoners

The underlying rates and distributions were based on published information derived from prisoner surveys in England and Wales and in the US, carried out over the period 2000-2007, as well as data from the 2017 England and Wales household surveys. Appendix A provides more detail on the analysis and Appendix B provides a full list of studies used to inform this work.

Findings and conclusions

The simulations incorporate changes in the prison population over time, and provide projections up to 2040. Separate results are given for male and female prisoners (see Figure 1), which cover both annual cumulative prevalence (based on the flow of prisoners into prison over a time period of 12 months – see Table 5 in Appendix A), and annual point prevalence of children with parents in prison (based on the prison population at any one time – see Table 6 in Appendix A).

³⁹ www.justice-episteme.com

Table 1 below shows the estimated ranges of how many children are/will be affected by paternal and maternal imprisonment (cumulative prevalence estimates) in 2018, 2020 and 2025 based on the 2017 England and Wales Household survey⁴⁰ (see Table 5 in Appendix A). The range of variation in the estimates reflects fluctuations over time and are due to other uncertainties in the underlying data and methods, with the average estimates over the next 7 years falling between 307,000 and 320,000. However, to simplify the policy discussion we take the number of **312,000**⁴¹ children (roughly midway) as a representative number, for planning purposes, of the likely annual demand for services in England and Wales; this figure should update the previous estimate of 200,000 (see Figure 2).

Table 1. Summary of annual cumulative prevalence rates for the number of dependent children affected by a parent admitted to prison, covering the years 2018, 2020 and 2025.

		Paternal imprisonment	Maternal imprisonment	Parental imprisonment
2018	Highest estimate	312,700	20,700	333,400
	Lowest estimate	277,300	13,300	290,600
	Average estimate	295,000	17,000	312,000
2020	Highest estimate	320,000	21,900	341,900
	Lowest estimate	285,000	13,100	298,100
	Average estimate	302,500	17,500	320,000
2025	Highest estimate	309,500	21,000	330,500
	Lowest estimate	270,500	12,800	283,300
	Average estimate	290,000	16,900	306,900

⁴⁰ The estimates based on the England and Wales Household survey which use recent (2017) information are likely to be the most representative over the period up to 2025. Cumulative prevalence is more relevant than point prevalence since it gives a more rounded view of the number of children that potentially need to be supported over a period of time.

⁴¹ Note that the calculation that provided this estimate is based on the cumulative number of offenders who are imprisoned over the year, that is, the total number of offenders that flow into the prison system in a year (roughly 140,000), rather than using the prison population figure as the basis of the calculation (roughly 85,000).

3 How big is the problem?

Figure 1. The number of incidents of children affected by paternal and maternal imprisonment, based on Crest's data simulation

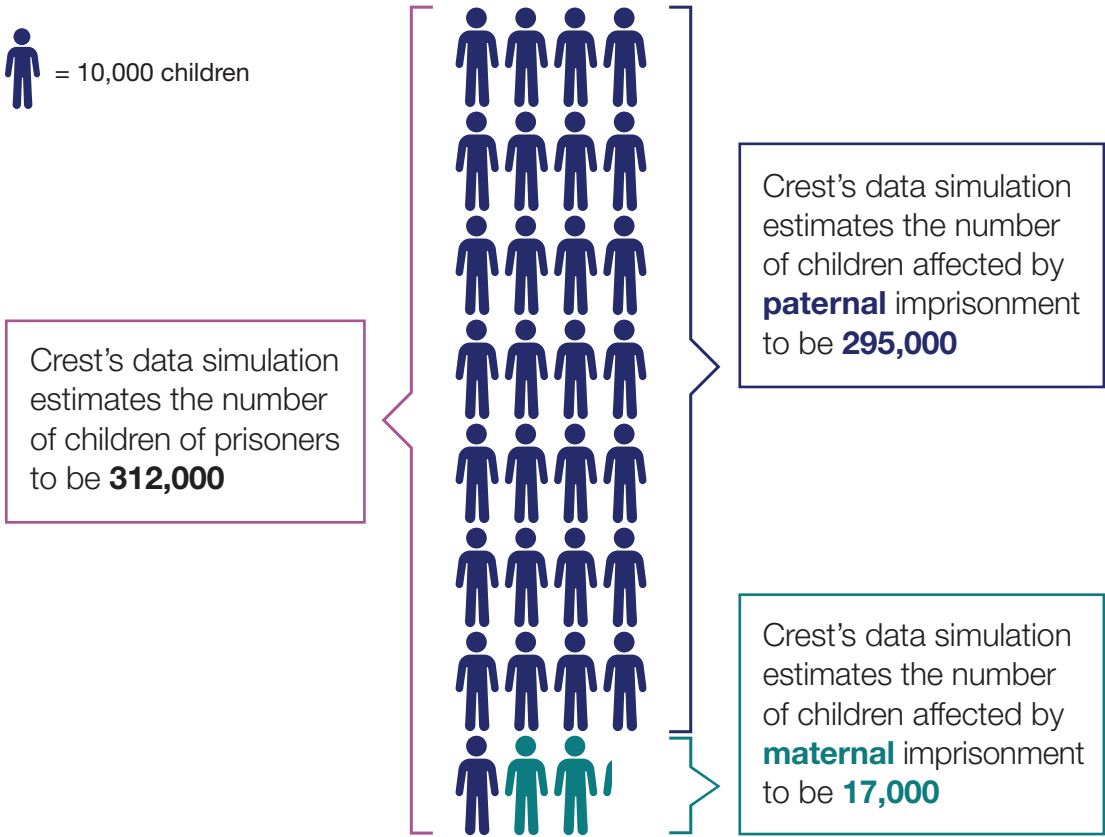
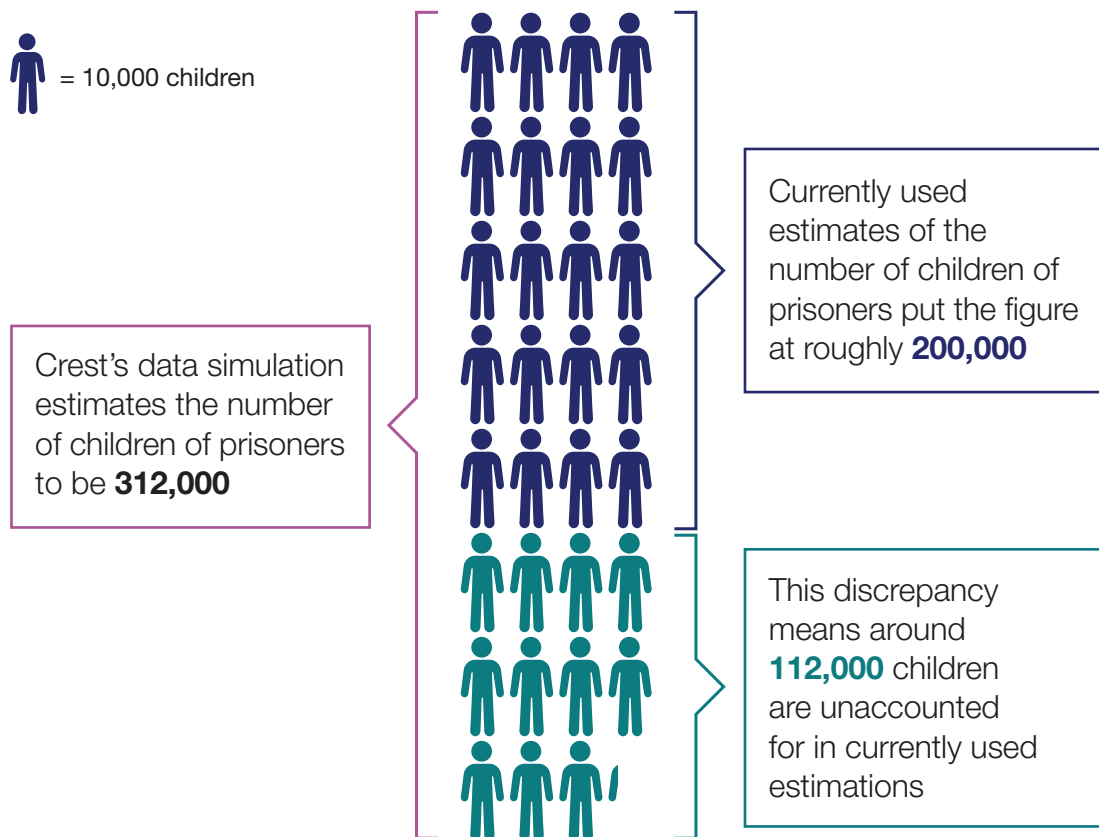


Figure 2. The discrepancy between currently used estimates of the number of children of prisoners (based on 2008 data) and cumulative estimates drawn from Crest’s data simulation



Impact of findings

The gap between the previous estimate and the updated figure, and the subsequently adjusted scale of the problem, both provide a powerful incentive for reforms that aim to better identify and support this hidden group. The following chapter explores the national policy context around children affected by parental imprisonment, and where opportunities for reform and improvements may lie.

4

Red flags:

the identification and disclosure of children of offenders and prisoners

Research has consistently highlighted the numerous and far-reaching negative outcomes associated with parental imprisonment, and Crest's data modelling has demonstrated that this is an issue currently affecting roughly 312,000 children per year in England and Wales (compared with previously used estimates of 200,000).

Despite widespread evidence that a parent's imprisonment negatively affects a child's life chances, there is no current system for identifying the children and families of offenders in order to establish what they need and intervene to support them as necessary. If a prisoner or prisoner's family want their children identified, they need, in most cases, to highlight it themselves.

This chapter explores the issues of identification and disclosure as they apply to children of prisoners. It argues that the current situation is inadequate, and that the imprisonment of a parent is squarely a safeguarding issue. The absence of a coordinated system leaves children at risk, families unsupported, and parents unable to fulfil their parenting obligations.

Criminal justice system points of contact

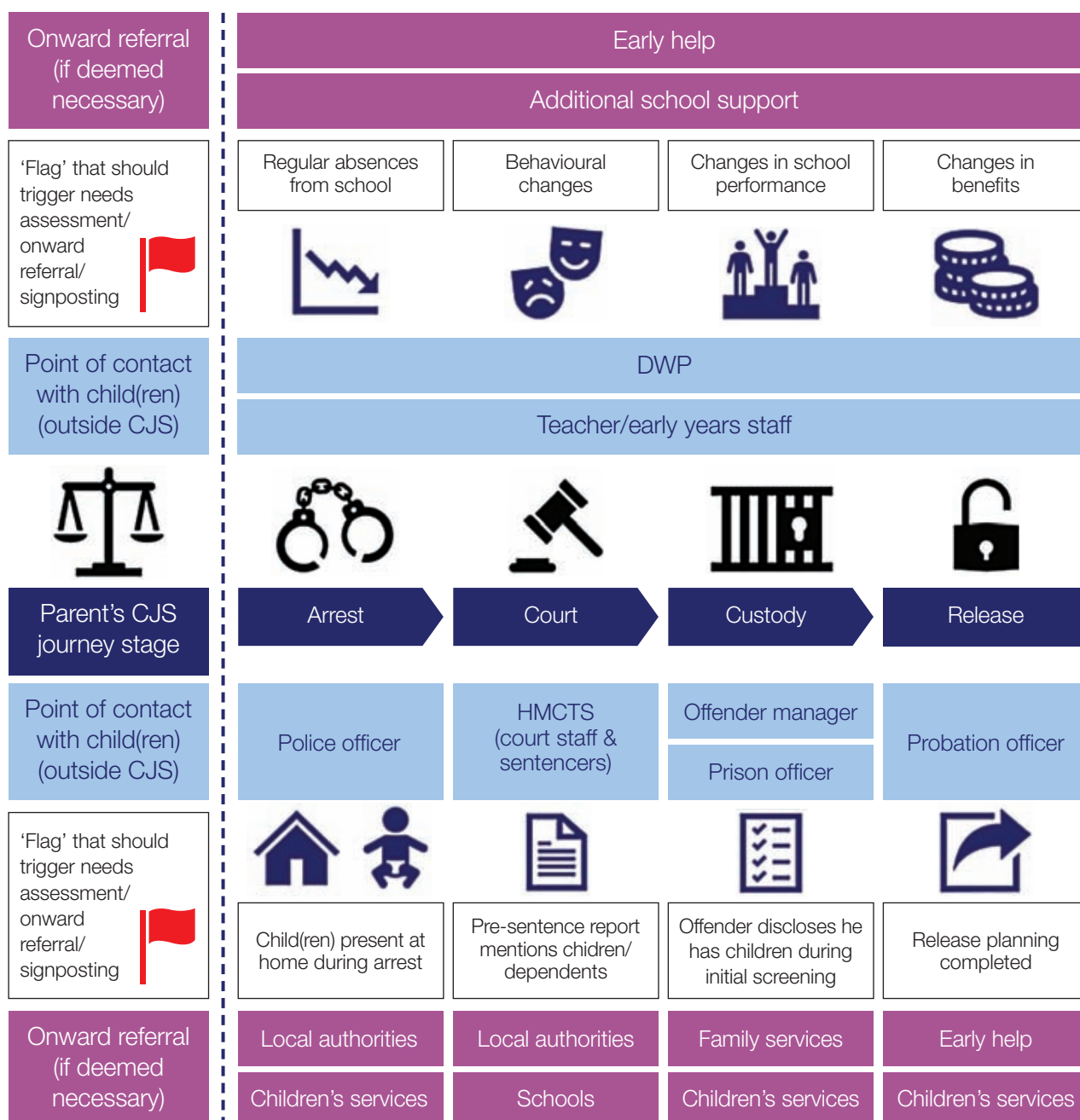
Children of imprisoned parents are not systematically identified at any point during their parent's journey through the criminal justice system. While the system may 'note' the presence of children at different stages, their wellbeing remains in many cases ignored. They remain hidden victims of a parent's sentence.

Information gathering and assessments of offenders are undertaken at many points during the criminal justice system journey. Similarly, there may be children physically present and/or referred to services at arrest, courts, during sentencing and prison visits (see Figure 3 on the following page).

There are also numerous individuals, groups and organisations who can support the children of imprisoned parents, and various policies which may apply at different stages of the criminal justice system journey. However, these numerous contact points are not currently being used to build an overview of the offender's family, and existing policies and guidance are applied unsystematically and inconsistently.

4 Red flags: the identification and disclosure of children of offenders and prisoners

Figure 3. Map of children of prisoners' points of contact with criminal and non-criminal justice agencies (pale blue boxes) at different points of their parents' criminal justice journey (dark blue boxes). Red flags (white boxes) indicate signs that should trigger a needs assessment /onward referral. Pink boxes show to whom the referral should be made.



Police

Opportunity

An opportunity for the criminal justice system to flag the existence of children within a suspect's family happens when the police arrest an offender. Children may be present during the arrest of a parent, and research shows that witnessing the event can have a profound impact on children's wellbeing, including an increased likelihood of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance misuse, and subsequent arrest (in boys only).⁴²⁻⁴⁴ It is therefore important for police officers to be aware of the significant negative effects witnessing the arrest of a parent can have on a child, and to prioritise children's welfare by conducting arrests in a constructive and child-centric way. A recent report, 'Collateral Damage',⁴⁵ examined the impact of witnessing a home raid by the police on the children and the siblings of offenders in England:

"They told me to get off my bed. They shoved me in a room and told me not to move off the sofa. It was like I had done something wrong. I felt like an object. I was being pushed around. I felt very, very small. It was a very traumatic experience and I was just really, really scared. I didn't know what was going on."

"When we walk down the street and see a police officer approaching, we have to cross the road. When we see a police car or van, with or without the sirens blaring, I have to pick my daughter up and cover her ears whilst she trembles in my arms."

Police officers will regularly see children in the house when they arrest a suspect. In addition to their safeguarding responsibilities, it is recognised that police have insights into family circumstances that many other services do not see.

Police forces regularly make referrals where there are safeguarding concerns following a domestic violence incident. In addition, police may complete a 'Persons on Premises' form, which allows officers to identify children present at residences. In addition, the Codes of Practice associated with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 specify police safeguards around arrest and search, including the respectful treatment of people present at properties where arrests take place.

⁴² Phillips, S., & Zhao, J. (2010). The relationship between witnessing arrests and elevated symptoms of posttraumatic stress: Findings from a national study of children involved in the child welfare system. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 32, 1246–1254.

⁴³ Kinner, S., Alati, R., Najman, J., & Williams, G. (2007). Do paternal arrest and imprisonment lead to child behavior problems and substance use? A longitudinal analysis. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 48, 1148–1156.

⁴⁴ Widom, C. P., & White, H. R. (1997). Problem behaviors in abused and neglected children grown up: Prevalence and co occurrence of substance abuse, crime and violence. *Criminal Behavior and Mental Health*, 7, 287–310.

⁴⁵ Tilley-Riley, J. (2016). Collateral damage: The impact of witnessing a home raid by the police, on the children and the siblings of offenders in England. Available at: <http://prisonadvice.org.uk/system/files/public/Research/Collateral%20Damage%20FINAL.pdf>

Gaps/weaknesses

The point at which an offender is initially arrested provides a key opportunity to assess the wellbeing of any children and to act as a trigger for intervention. However, the mere presence of children at an arrest will not be sufficient in most cases to warrant any kind of alert to other services, despite research showing that the sudden arrival of police and removal of a parent in itself can leave a significant imprint, the effects of which can worsen over time.

Courts

Opportunity

The courts have a duty to consider the welfare of dependent children when sentencing parents who are primary carers, as stipulated by sentencing guidelines and case law. Furthermore, there is a legal principle that the sentencing of a parent for a criminal offence engages the right to family life of both the parent and the child, as the right is not lost automatically by reason of criminal conviction.⁴⁶

Being a 'sole or primary carer for dependent relatives' is included in all published sentencing guidelines as a mitigating factor that can affect the sentence given. Sentencing guidelines also specify that it may be appropriate to avoid imprisonment if a custodial sentence would impact dependents in such a way that imprisonment would be 'disproportionate to achieving the aims of sentencing'.

Gaps/weaknesses

Despite these well established principles, the application of the guidelines within courts is often inconsistent or misunderstood.⁴⁷ This may be due to a lack of awareness of case law relating to the sentencing of offenders with dependent children; insufficient information about the families of offenders being presented to the courts; a concern that the presence of a child could be a 'get out of jail free' card; as well as wider concerns around the lack of confidence in appropriate community alternatives.

Finally and paradoxically, the courts' responsibility for considering the welfare of offenders' dependent children relates only to sentencing itself. It does not extend to any wider responsibilities such as notifying services if there are concerns about the presence of a child in a family where the primary carer is to be sentenced to custody. A legal argument might be presented in court against a custodial sentence on behalf of the defendant on account of their caring responsibilities. However, if that argument does not prevail, no-one in the court will consider what will happen next to the defendant's child or children.

⁴⁶ R (on application of P and Q) v Secretary of State for Home Department [2001] EWCA Civ 1151 at paragraph 78 cited in Sentencing of Mothers, PRT (2015)

⁴⁷ Minson, S., Rebecca, N., & Earle, J. (2015). Sentencing of mothers: Improving the sentencing process and outcomes for women with dependent children. Prison Reform Trust. Available at: http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/portals/0/documents/sentencing_mothers.pdf

The NSPCC and Barnardo's have called for Child Impact Assessments to be introduced to give greater prominence to the effect on children of parents who are given custodial sentences:

“UK and devolved governments should introduce Child Impact Assessments after sentencing for those given custodial and noncustodial sentences. This would ensure that data is captured about dependent children, their ages and needs, that their legal rights are recognised and implemented as a matter of course, and that their care needs are properly considered and met.”⁴⁸

Prisons

Opportunity

Prisons tend to have a greater policy focus on children of offenders as a specific vulnerable group to be supported compared with other areas of the criminal justice system. For example, offenders undergo a basic screening upon arrival at the prison which includes questions around dependencies and caring responsibilities. Furthermore, HMPPS guidance on providing visits⁴⁹ make specific reference to child welfare:

“The delivery of services to the children and families of offenders must be considered in the context of other cross government initiatives around supporting families with multiple needs. This involves a partnership approach to whole family support. The statutory framework for this, in both England and Wales, is the Children Act 2004, requiring agencies to make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Both Prison Governors and probation providers have important duties under the Act, many of which are associated with either the child's right to contact with parents who are held in custody or with the safeguarding and wellbeing of children with whom they have contact.”

⁴⁸ NSPCC & Barnardo's (2014). An unfair sentence. All babies count: A spotlight on the criminal justice system. Available here: <http://www.barnardos.org.uk/an-unfair-sentence.pdf>

⁴⁹ Guidance available here: <https://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/offenders/psipso/psi-2011/psi-16-2011-providing-visits-and-services-to-visitors.doc>

Prisons' relatively greater focus on children and families has become increasingly apparent as a result of changes to the national policy context in the past fifteen years, leading to families of prisoners being considered of central importance in terms of rehabilitation, and to fundamental changes in the ways prisons view and treat families of offenders. For example, since March 2016 there has been a designated HMPPS families lead.

In 2004, in response to landmark reports (including Lord Woolf's 1991 report following the Strangeways riot)⁵⁰ demonstrating the positive effects of maintaining family ties on re-offending rates, a Children and Families Pathway was included in the NOMS National Reducing Re-Offending Action Plan. This pathway provided a framework for maintaining family relationships by providing better advice and guidance materials for families, integrating parenting and relationship skills into mainstream support, and increasing engagement from voluntary sectors.

A subsequent review of the pathway in 2014 concluded that despite individual examples of good practice, there was an overall discrepancy between national policy vision and delivery. Specifically, family services varied significantly in their scale and quality, with many being limited in scale and ambition. Family services also tended not to be targeted to specific prisoner or family needs, with little structured assessment within sentence planning.

As part of the Government's prison reform plans, Lord Farmer was commissioned to conduct an independent review into how maintaining family ties can positively impact both re-offending rates and the intergenerational transmission of offending. The report⁵¹ and its recommendations have gained significant traction within the prison estate, representing a significant shift in prison policy relating to families of offenders.

Prison governors are now required to apply the recommendations of the Farmer review, and every prison must form a 'family and significant others strategy', to be published on the National Information Centre on Children of Offenders (NICCO) website – also the host website for the MOJ's review of the progress made nationally on the Farmer Review's recommendations. As a result, family is becoming a mainstream issue in prisons, having previously operated on the periphery of prison policy and practice.

⁵⁰ Lord Woolf (1991). A Summary of the main findings and recommendations of the inquiry into prison disturbances. Prison Reform Trust. Available at: <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/portals/0/documents/woolf%20report.pdf>

⁵¹ Farmer, L. (2017). *The Importance of Strengthening Prisoners' Family Ties to Prevent Reoffending and Reduce Intergenerational Crime*. London: Ministry of Justice.

Case Study: The Acorn House at HMP Askham Grange

In HMP Askham Grange, the Acorn House initiative aims to nurture family ties between imprisoned mothers and their children by allowing extended day visits or overnight visits for residents, in addition to routine visits. The house sits within the prison grounds, but there is no staff intervention other than pre-visit work to prepare a plan of activities. A family support worker is also present to assist the mothers with any potential difficulties. Participants are selected on a case by case basis according to their needs, with no specific selection criteria.

HMP Askham Grange's family and significant others strategy⁵² also states that release on temporary license (ROTL) is used extensively to maintain and build family links. Types of licenses include childcare resettlement leave, day and overnight release, and special purpose licenses.

Case Study: Triple P parenting programme at HMP Barlinnie

A further example of family becoming a mainstream issue in prisons can be seen in HMP Barlinnie's ongoing Triple P parenting programme. Triple P is an evidence-based parenting programme which focuses on developing positive relationships, attitudes and behaviour. The programme also includes family bonding sessions, which allow the fathers to apply the skills and strategies they have learned throughout the programme.

⁵² HMP Askham Grange: Family and significant others strategy (2018). Available here: <https://www.nicco.org.uk/userfiles/downloads/5b9a2254e8b41-askham-grange-strategy-doc.docx>

Gaps/weaknesses

It is inevitable that the current crisis in prisons, and the resultant overcrowding, will have had a knock-on effect on prisoners' families and their ability to maintain family ties during their relative's sentence. The Criminal Justice Alliance contacted their members to explore the impact of prison overcrowding on their work in prisons, who reported the following challenges, amongst others:⁵³

- **Sudden and last minute transfers of prisoners, resulting in further distances for families to have to travel for visits**
 - **In some cases, families turned up for visits only to find out then that their family member had been transferred**
- **Insufficient seating or lockers for visiting families in visitors' centres**
- **Insufficient staff in visitors' centres to support visiting families**
- **Prisoners' families being unable to get through to helplines to book visits**
- **Increased demand on voluntary sector staff working with families**
- **Increased demand for family visits, and more competition for weekend visits**
- **A decrease in the number of families being involved in sentence planning or reviews**
- **Reduced access to group interventions or family interventions due to pressures on prison staff**

The success of family provisions in prisons unavoidably depends on adequate funding. The prison service's commissioning of family services standardised their funding in 2016, to a flat rate of £65 per head for every adult male prisoner in a public sector prison. This sum is unlikely to be adequate to provide whole-family support for the duration of an offender's sentence.

The impact of prisons' family services on the children of offenders also depends on establishing a broad approach that applies across the prison as a whole. There has also been a variety in the uptake of the Farmer review's recommendations across the prison estate, with some prisons arguably only providing sticking plaster solutions. More detail on the prison estate's response to the Farmer review is provided in the following chapter.

⁵³ Criminal Justice Alliance (2012). Crowded Out? The impact of prison overcrowding on rehabilitation. Available at: http://criminaljusticealliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Crowded_Out_CriminalJusticeAlliance.pdf

Wider public service points of contact

Children's services

Opportunity

There are clear international and national legal frameworks around the separation of parents from their children which are applicable in England and Wales. For example, Article 9 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) states:

“States’ parties shall respect the right of the child who is separated from one or both parents to maintain personal relations and direct contact with both parents on a regular basis, except if it is contrary to the child’s best interests.”

The consideration and treatment of children who experience enforced separation from their parents through parental imprisonment feels in many ways different from other enforced separations. For example, children separated from their parents in care proceedings are provided with legal protections, a court appointed guardian and additional support at school. Such separations are preceded by extensive deliberation by qualified professionals, with children put at the centre of the process. Conversely, parental imprisonment can lead to the sudden and unexpected separation of children from their parents in the absence of similar supportive provisions, despite the presence of guidance and mechanisms for considering their welfare, and the state’s duty of care towards children.

Gaps/weaknesses

An acknowledgement of the impact, and an offer of support, should always be prioritised when removing a child’s parent, particularly with regards to the specific needs and outcomes associated with losing a parent sent to custody. However, the current process through which parents are removed due to imprisonment show clear gaps in the intervention of services that should support and protect children.

Troubled Families and early help services

Opportunity

The development of early help initiatives, such as the Troubled Families Programme, have in recent years driven the development of more comprehensive approaches to families and children whose problems do not fit neatly into the remit of one service. It is now well established that to intervene effectively with families who are battling with a range of problems, it is important to take a whole family view of their circumstances, and provide help that addresses those circumstances. For example, if a child's attendance at school declines, asking why and addressing that underlying problem is more likely to get him or her back into school on a long term basis rather than taking enforcement actions such as fines or prosecutions.

Troubled Families Programme

The Troubled Families Programme was launched in 2012. The programme aims to make significant and sustained progress for the most disadvantaged families through intensive, 'whole family' intervention work, with a focus on outcomes.

The programme aims to address previous failures of public services, due to siloed and reactive approaches, to help families with multiple problems. Instead of responding to single presenting problems, the Troubled Families Programme aims to understand and tackle the families' underlying root problems. The programme is also underpinned by the principle of appreciating the interconnectedness of the families' problems.

The programme's family intervention model involves a keyworker being assigned to a family, who then works with them to understand the family dynamics and interconnected problems. Through close working, a persistent and assertive approach, and liaising with other relevant agencies, the keyworker develops a relationship with the family and develops a plan of action, with clear outcomes. The keyworker offers practical assistance in the home, and also helps the family address issues such as debt, addiction and health.

Gaps/weaknesses

Local troubled families services offer the potential to meet the needs of children and families with a parent in custody. However, the formula for identifying families allows for wide discretion on the focus of local programmes, meaning the absence of any figures on the number of children affected makes children of prisoners a difficult group for troubled families or early help programmes to prioritise. In the next chapter we explore some of the challenges faced where this has been attempted.

Schools

Opportunity

Children of imprisoned individuals are less likely to attend school regularly, less likely to achieve higher grades, less likely to pursue higher education, and less likely to find work after school – this gap widens as they move through school and later life. School settings therefore present a key access point for providing early and individualised intervention.

A call to the school to notify them of the family's circumstances could make the difference in helping the child feel supported, intervening early before the associated issues take hold, and understanding and being aware of changes in behaviour. A very simple system to make schools aware of children in homes where there is a domestic violence provides a model for joint working between schools and police forces for children whose parents are arrested.

Case Study: Operation Encompass

Problem

Children are often hidden victims when it comes to domestic abuse within the home, with an average occurrence of 35 incidents of domestic abuse before the police are called. If schools are not made aware of police involvement, children are expected to attend school having witnessed traumatic events with no additional support being provided, nor an understanding of their current wellbeing. Prior to Operation Encompass, there had been no information sharing system or procedures for the early reporting of domestic abuse incidents to local schools and academies.

Insight

Operation Encompass is a trauma-informed charity, who have insight into the impact of domestic abuse as an adverse childhood experience (ACE). They aim to mitigate against the negative outcomes associated with exposure to domestic abuse, and other ACEs.

Reform

Operation Encompass' scheme is an early intervention safeguarding partnership between the police and the education system, which aims to support children and young people exposed to domestic abuse. In local areas signed up to Operation Encompass, the police report to a school's 'Key Adult' before the start of the next school day when a child or young person has been involved or exposed to a domestic abuse incident the previous evening/day. The information is given in confidence, allowing the Key Adult to provide support to the child if needed and wanted.

Outcome

Currently, 33 forces in England and Wales have information-sharing agreements with schools to support children exposed to domestic abuse. The Home Office awarded Operation Encompass £161,000 in September 2018 to further expand its reach.

Gaps/weaknesses

There is a clear role for schools in supporting children affected by parental imprisonment, but this is reliant on schools having staff with the skills to provide effective, holistic support. In recent years, however, local authorities and schools have been under increasing funding pressure whilst – at the same time – the number of vulnerable children has risen. Although all schools have pastoral responsibilities for the children in their care, not all schools have the resources for dedicated practitioners. Consequently, schools often lack the support required to deliver the most effective interventions for children of prisoners. Some charities, such as School-Home Support (SHS), aim to address this gap by placing dedicated practitioners within schools to support children in need (including children of prisoners).

Case Study: School-Home Support

School-Home Support (SHS) is a charity working with children and families to maximise educational opportunities, improve life chances, and break intergenerational cycles of deprivation and low aspiration through holistic, early intervention. Partnering with schools, local authorities, and communities, SHS looks beyond the classroom to understand and tackle the issues affecting children's learning, such as poverty, inadequate housing, mental ill health, family conflict and parental imprisonment. SHS employs expert frontline practitioners who work with families to address a wide range of complex issues, building their engagement and resilience so that they can resolve future issues independently.

Outcome

In 2016/2017, SHS practitioners worked directly with 108 schools and delivered targeted interventions to over 10,000 children and families, with their wider work reaching 54,000 individuals. As a result of their work in schools, 70% of children whose poor attendance was an issue improved their attendance; 82% of pupils identified as having behavioural problems improved their behaviour; 82% of pupils where there was a concern improved their engagement in learning; and 73% of parents became more engaged with their child's learning.

Costing

A full-time SHS practitioner at a school with a caseload of approximately 50 pupils costs £43,733. This is equivalent to a cost of £875 per pupil, which was associated with a cost saving of £8,784 – this means that for every £1 spent on SHS, £11 is saved across the public purse.⁵⁴

Such significant cost benefits provide clear support for the 'win-win' outcomes associated with taking a joint working approach to children of prisoners, with cost savings applying to all agencies involved, as well as the criminal justice system longer-term (due to reductions in intergenerational offending).

⁵⁴ Marsh, K., & Surgey, G. (2012). *An economic analysis of School-Home Support*. London: Matrix Evidence.

In the absence of any notification to the school (either by a third party or by a family member), schools are reliant on the child speaking to a teacher, or teachers noticing when problems start to emerge, such as behavioural issues or regular absences from school due to prison visits. The response of schools to children of prisoners varies widely, and schools often report a lack of appropriate training on how to identify and support children of prisoners and their needs.⁵⁵ When access to support does exist, it is often piecemeal and dependent on the commitment, interest and past experiences of the school and its staff.⁵⁶

Case Study: National Information Centre on Children of Offenders (NICCO – formerly iHOP)

Problem

Professionals working with families and children of offenders often operate individually, with their own resources and ways of working. As such, there is a lack of centralised information on how best to support children of prisoners in practice, which may be particularly useful for professionals who have not previously attempted to support this group in a targeted way.

Insight

Barnardo's (who deliver NICCO in partnership with HMPPS) have been running a range of support services for children of prisoners for over 20 years, and therefore have extensive experience, knowledge and networks relating to the relevant issues and best practice.

Reform

NICCO is an information service to inform the practice of all professionals who come into contact with the children and families of offenders, as well as academics and those responsible for strategic development and commissioning. Comprehensive and up-to-date information is listed from voluntary and statutory agencies, including details of Barnardo's training programmes for professionals. The NICCO website is organised into three directories: services, resources and research. It also includes a map function where users can click on a prison to find out what family support is available there, or find out what community-based family support is available in their area.

Outcome

NICCO provides an opportunity for HMPPS to share information and best practice, and is also the only source which summarises all nationally available support services for offenders' families in one place.

⁵⁵ Gill, O., & Deegan, M. J. (2013). *Working with children with a parent in prison. Messages for practice from two Barnardo's pilot services*. Essex: Barnardo's.

⁵⁶ Glover J. 2009. *Every Night You Cry: The Realities of Having a Parent in Prison*. Essex: Barnardo's.

Safeguarding children

The legal framework and current policy and expectations for supporting the welfare and safeguarding of children is set out in the Government's 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'.⁵⁷ This guide highlights the importance of targeting help towards those who are likely to be at risk, working together across agencies to promote the welfare of children, and sharing information to keep children safe. The guidance also sets out the safeguarding related responsibilities and obligations of services as stipulated by the Children Act (2004), such as having policies in place around sharing information and having a designated safeguarding practitioner. These responsibilities apply to services and bodies such as police and crime commissioners (PCCs), the probation service and the prison service.

There can be little disagreement that as an extremely vulnerable group, the welfare of prisoners' children should be of concern. However, there are no specific references to children of prisoners in the Government's safeguarding guidance document. Furthermore, unlike many other vulnerable groups with well established poor outcomes such as children in care, children who are themselves in the criminal justice system, or children with special education needs and disabilities (SEND), it is clear that outside the criminal justice system there are very few services who have established comprehensive arrangements to ensure that the needs of children of prisoners are identified and met. There is an over-reliance both within and outside the criminal justice system on charities and third sector organisations to pick up the pieces where public services have failed to intervene and support children of offenders. We found a handful of local authorities with 'parent in prison' policies, but these were isolated examples rather than the norm.

Self-disclosure

In the absence of any systematic approach to identify children of prisoners by criminal justice agencies, children's services, and early help services, there is instead a reliance on 'self-disclosure'. That is, should a prisoner or family member need help in relation to the care of their children or other practical issues, they are left to put themselves forward as needing support.

Such a reliance on self-identification is problematic. It is widely acknowledged that there are high levels of non-disclosure from prisoners and their families – in most cases because they fear the consequences of children's services possibly removing their children. For example, a report which looked into the needs of offenders' families and children in Bolton found that 75% of families stated that they did not currently access any child and family services for fear of social services involvement.⁵⁸ Fear of being stigmatised was also a prominent theme that stopped families disclosing they had a family member in the criminal justice system. Despite these hindrances to self-disclosure, 55% of the primary schools surveyed as part of the report stated that they relied on the children's family notifying the head teacher when identifying children of offenders, and 44% of schools declared that they had never been asked to assist in supporting contact between a child or family and a parent in prison.

⁵⁷ HM Government (2018). Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/729914/Working_Together_to_Safeguard_Children-2018.pdf

⁵⁸ Partners of Prisoner and Families Support Group (2010). Every Family Matters: Offenders' Children and Families in Bolton. Available at: <https://shonaminson.com/2018/06/13/the-care-of-prisoners-children-a-response-to-the-westminster-hall-debate-12th-june-2018/>

This means that families may actually be receiving less help than others, despite their increased needs and risk factors. The enforced removal of a parent from the child's home (either as a primary carer or part of a couple), often unexpectedly or with no notice, will result in huge upheaval and change for a child, which may include a negative impact on their mental and emotional wellbeing, financial hardship, increased debt, the stress and emotional impact on remaining carers, stigmatisation from others, and a negative impact on their educational attainment.

Regardless of whether or not the child has sufficient resilience, and/or the support and practical help required to endure this, they surely warrant serious attention. The majority of parents will of course want to ensure that their child gets help in these circumstances, but not all – parents may withhold information out of a misplaced sense that their child's wellbeing is better served by not having any help, or perhaps their own circumstances might be preventing them from even considering their children's needs. Perhaps the parents that do not ensure that their child gets help, or cannot admit to it, should cause further concern.

Either way, a system which does not ask any questions is not fit for purpose.

Conclusion

Children of prisoners do not benefit from a coordinated approach that acknowledges their specific risks and needs as a particularly vulnerable group. There is no systematic identification of children of prisoners at any point during their parent's criminal justice journey, meaning their needs cannot be adequately assessed nor addressed. Instead, the system relies on families of offenders identifying themselves to services.

In summary, the system currently suffers from a lack of awareness of children of prisoners (as demonstrated by the lack of procedures in place to systematically identify them, and the significant underestimation of their true number), and a lack of understanding of their needs (as demonstrated by the lack of specificity in current national policy).

The following chapter looks at how taking a whole family approach that crosses the boundaries of prison walls would provide mutual benefits to children of prisoners, their families, and offenders, with associated cost benefits that would span across services both within and outside the criminal justice system.

5

Bringing the 'outside' in and getting the 'inside' to develop a whole family approach

Strong family ties are predictive of more successful desistance from offending.⁵⁹ Despite further evidence suggesting that strong family ties also reduce the risk of intergenerational offending, current efforts at recognising children of prisoners within the prison system are largely seen through the lens of the prison and the offender. While key relationships are vital for children, families are often 'used' to incentivise good offender behaviour in prison, or to provide accommodation on release, without focusing on the quality of that relationship and its mutual benefits (and potential risks). The cart seems to be put before the horse.

Recognising the impact of sentencing, imprisonment and resettlement on the whole family is likely to reduce reoffending, mitigate the harm of parental imprisonment on children and families, and address intergenerational offending. A whole family approach would also involve identifying circumstances where maintaining family ties with a prisoner parent puts the safety or wellbeing of their children at risk, or creates too much pressure within families. Such situations are at risk of being overlooked if the resettlement of the offender is prioritised over the needs of other members of the family.

There are no touch points currently in the system that allow those concerned with the offender and those concerned with the family to come together to develop shared objectives. What is happening in one part of the system is not cross-referenced or shared with what is happening in another part of the system. From speaking to those working in front-line services, instances of information sharing are generally limited to serious safeguarding issues and high-risk situations. An example of a rare instance when children's services and the criminal justice system come together is for 'farewell visits', where a prisoner has his/her final opportunity to see their child in prison before they are taken into care or adopted. Clearly, such joint working would be better placed before situations have become crises which are past the point of no return. Evidence in favour of early interventions notwithstanding, family services in prisons report having seen an increase in 'farewell visits' in recent years, which they see as suggesting an increase in the proportion of high risk and complex need families coming into contact with the criminal justice system, and the failure of early help services to address their needs.

Early identification and intervention is entirely possible, as children of prisoners are identifiable at numerous points during their parents' journey through the criminal justice system, and parental imprisonment offers a clear trigger point for early intervention and support. However, not one of these interactions currently triggers a formal identification process, nor a needs assessment of the child, meaning crucial opportunities to take a whole family, integrated approach are lost from the outset.

⁵⁹ May, C., Sharma, N., & Stewart, D. (2008). *Factors linked to reoffending: a one-year follow-up of prisoners who took part in the Resettlement Surveys 2001, 2003 and 2004*. London: Ministry of Justice.

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Why does the current system fail children of prisoners?

Research has demonstrated with certainty that parental imprisonment is associated with negative outcomes for children, even if we do not know for certain whether it is a specific and independent risk factor. As their higher risk is related to a multitude of factors that occur in conjunction with parental imprisonment, children of prisoners require holistic support that targets their co-occurring existing disadvantages.

In the following sections, we explore how children and families of offenders are overlooked or insufficiently supported at different points of the parent's criminal justice journey.

Resettlement

Parental imprisonment is a significant and critical life event for children, affecting family relationships, contributing to negative outcomes, and economic and social issues such as a reduction in finances and increased social exclusion. The process of re-settlement after release presents its own challenges to families and children, however this has been relatively under-researched compared to the impact of incarceration on families. Much of the research that aims to explain findings about the link between family ties and reoffending has focused on the 'social capital' provided by families e.g. by facilitating employment or accommodation upon release. Relatively less research has looked into the emotional support provided by families, which may help ease the process of reintegration after release.⁶⁰

Expecting families to take a significant amount of responsibility for their relative's resettlement and rehabilitation may therefore put further pressure on individuals who are already experiencing considerable difficulties. Not all families will be willing or prepared to welcome their relative back into the family home upon release. Relationships may have changed significantly during incarceration, as well as family roles: family members may have become more independent and learned to cope on their own during their relative's sentence, which can be difficult for ex-prisoners to adjust to. The incarceration of a family member could even have provided relief or a respite for families who have had to deal with challenging issues which can be associated with offending behaviour such as domestic abuse, substance misuse, or crimes being committed against family members.

Associating offenders' families with resettlement therefore risks only recognising or supporting families in terms of 'their instrumental value, not because of any commitment to maintaining families for their own sake'.⁶¹ A 2014 joint thematic review on resettlement provision for adult offenders by HM Inspectorate of Prisons, HM Inspectorate of Probation and Ofsted found that 'too little account was taken of whether initial arrangements [for living with a family on release] were sustainable and

⁶⁰ Mills, A. (2005). 'Great Expectations?': A Review of the Role of Prisoners' Families in England and Wales. In Selected Papers from the 2004 British Criminology Conference, 7, 6-9.

⁶¹ Codd, H. (2004). Prisoners' Families: Issues in Law and Policy. Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, Guest Lecture. 7th June 2004, London

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what continuing support might be needed'.⁶² The review also found no examples of family members being involved in sentence planning reviews – not even when the offender was intending on living with their family post-release. The inspection reported that pre-release, all offenders had positive outlooks about living with their families, but that this often soured post-release, with many reporting that they felt like a burden.

Prison visits: interventions vs incentives

Despite research findings demonstrating that children and families of offenders are themselves in need, in practice, the needs of the offender are routinely prioritised, sometimes at the cost of the needs of their children and families. For example, in male prisons, additional family visits are one of the incentives awarded for positive and motivated behaviour. Every prisoner has a status (basic, standard or enhanced) based on their behaviour under the Incentives and Earned Privileges (IEP) scheme, and in general, male prisoners on basic status are entitled to two one-hour visits per months, whereas prisoners on enhanced status are entitled to four one-hour visits per month.

In women's prisons however, the number of family visits are exempt from the IEP scheme, with guidelines specifically stating that children 'should not be penalised from visiting or contacting their mother because of the mother's behaviour'.⁶³ Barnardo has called on the Government to bring IEP schemes in male prisons in line with female prisons, arguing that children should not be punished for their fathers' behaviour. This discrepancy in guidelines also raises questions about how the prison service interprets 'family ties', if their IEP schemes suggest that greater importance is put on maintaining relationships between children and incarcerated mothers than between children and incarcerated fathers.

⁶² Criminal Justice Joint Inspection (2014). A joint thematic review by HM Inspectorate of Prisons, HM Inspectorate of Probation and Ofsted. Resettlement provision for adult offenders: Accommodation and education, training and employment. Available at: <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/cji/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2014/09/Resettlement-thematic-for-print-Sept-2014.pdf>

⁶³ PSO 4800 Women Prisoners 26/04/08 Issue 297. Available at: https://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/offenders/psipso/psipso/PSO_4800_women_prisoners.doc

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The IEP system

The Incentives and Earned Privileges (IEP) system was first introduced in 1995. Prisoners are able to earn additional privileges by demonstrating responsible behaviour and participation in work or other constructive activity.

A revised version of the IEP scheme was introduced in 2013,⁶⁴ which added a fourth IEP level (entry), to the existing three (basic, standard and enhanced). All new receptions were automatically given entry level status for the first two weeks of their sentence. From there, they could be demoted to basic, or moved to standard. Prisoners who had been on standard level for some time would be able to apply for enhanced status.

The IEP scheme revisions drew widespread criticism, particularly with regards to the ban on all sentenced prisoners receiving parcels including books and other basic items. The additional 'entry' level was argued by governors to be 'bureaucratic and penalises prisoners who are new, setting up an adversarial relationship with staff from the outset'.⁶⁵ It was also argued that the reviews made it easier for prisoners to be downgraded an IEP level, and harder to progress to a higher IEP status.

In September 2018, a consultation was launched to give prison governors greater freedom to offer the incentives which work best for their particular cohort of prisoners. The new IEP system also removed 'entry' level.

This is an opportunity to build on the Farmer review recommendations; governors should utilise the added flexibility provided by the consultation to ensure that prisoners are not penalised in a way that reduces their access to services essential to rehabilitation, such as family visits – which in turn would ensure children of offenders are not unduly punished due to their parents' IEP status.

⁶⁴ PSI 30/2013: Incentives and Earned Privileges. Available at: <https://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/offenders/psipso/psi-2013/psi-30-2013-1.doc>

⁶⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-incentives-framework-to-help-prisoners-turn-their-lives-around>

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The use of prison visits as an incentive also overlooks their potential to be used as a family intervention. However, there are many practical challenges that make prison visits difficult to manage for families.

Case Study: Lincolnshire Action Trust

Problem

A parent being sent to prison has an impact on a child's psychological wellbeing, their family life and their life beyond the family home (e.g. at school). Maintaining ties with an incarcerated parent can act to mitigate these negative outcomes, however keeping in touch with family members who are in prison can be very difficult, and prison visits can prove to be a daunting experience for children.

Insight

Research has consistently demonstrated the positive impact of maintaining family ties on reoffending rates. Moreover, contact between prisoners and their children, especially the opportunity to visit in a family-friendly environment, has the potential to improve the wellbeing of these children and improve their outcomes.⁶⁶ In 2017, Lincolnshire Action Trust, who have been working with a variety of agencies in numerous prisons since 2000, partnered with Ormston Families (a family charity operating in the east of England). This partnership combined a broad knowledge base of how to keep the relationships of offenders and their children strong in the face of difficulties thrown up by parental incarceration.

Reform

Lincolnshire Action Trust have teams of staff based at a number of prisons in Lincolnshire who are able to support families and children. The teams act as a point of contact; provide information about visiting and the prison; encourage family visits; aim to make visits less daunting for children; and provide general advice on other issues families may be struggling with, such as finances and housing. The teams also develop links with schools and other agencies to ensure a father can stay involved in his child's life whilst in prison. 'Being Dad', a course to develop and hone parenting skills, is also offered to fathers and carers in prison.

Outcome

In 2016, 31 new cases were opened for in-depth support, and a further 303 children were supported during visits to the prison. Adult visitors to HMP Lincoln were supported via the FIRST team (Family Intervention and Release Support team), and 231 individuals accessed specific advice or support during the year.

⁶⁶ Nesmith, A., & Ruhland, E. (2008). Children of Incarcerated Parents: Challenges and Resiliency in Their Own Words. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 30(1), 1119-1130.

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Lord Farmer's review and the response so far

The Farmer review (see the previous chapter for more information on the Farmer review's scope and aims) has undoubtedly resulted in a significant boost to the awareness of offenders' families within the criminal justice system, and prisons in particular. One of the individuals we spoke to at HMP Parc described the review as a 'quantum leap' in terms of prison policy, and as a result, the focus on family has become very mainstream within prisons having been a peripheral issue until recently.

"I do want to hammer home a very simple principle of reform that needs to be a golden thread running through the prison system and the agencies that surround it. That principle is that relationships are fundamentally important if people are to change."⁶⁷

Lord Farmer

Though the Farmer review discussed provisions for offenders' families, the focus of the review was overwhelmingly on the offender, based on findings that maintaining family ties has a positive effect on reoffending rates. Though this is undoubtedly a positive finding, and a logical area to focus efforts to reduce recidivism rates, the result has been that families are often discussed and treated as a resource. Therefore, despite the positive outcomes that have occurred as a result of the Farmer review, its focus on the offender means that an opportunity to reduce offending in the next generation by also looking at children's best interests is missed.

So that the review can have a long-lasting and significant impact on the lives of children affected by parental imprisonment, it is important that prisons who are implementing the recommendations appreciate the need for a broad approach, and that the benefits of maintaining and strengthening family ties feed into all aspects of prison life, such as safer custody.

Many prisons have put the Farmer review recommendations into practice by making visit halls more child-friendly (e.g. by having play areas, and/or play specialists), and offering family days (family-focused, longer visits held periodically throughout the year in addition to regular family visits). These are a positive addition to prisons' provisions for offenders' children, and act to improve the experience of visiting a parent for a child, but these are not the panacea.

Play areas can reduce the amount of time that a child spends with their parent during a visit, as generally offenders cannot get up from their chair and accompany their children around the visit hall. This could be precious time lost in nurturing family relationships.

Family days, now a common feature in many prisons, provide an opportunity for parents to have more natural interactions with their children, as generally offenders can move around the visit hall with their children and take part in joint activities. However, they can only accommodate a very

⁶⁷ Farmer, L. (2017). *The Importance of Strengthening Prisoners' Family Ties to Prevent Reoffending and Reduce Intergenerational Crime*. London: Ministry of Justice.

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small proportion of families, and are generally infrequent. Furthermore, though policy varies across prisons, they generally tend to favour enhanced prisoners, which again means family visits are used as an incentive rather than an opportunity for intervention, and lead once more to children being directly affected by their parents' behaviour in prison.

Though the Farmer review has led to significant changes in the importance placed on offenders' families, how individual prisons put the report's recommendations into practice varies greatly. For the recommendations to have a real impact on families (i.e. the offender and their relatives, not just the offender), the entire culture of the prison needs to change accordingly. This can be achieved, for example, by viewing family visits as an opportunity for whole family interventions rather than an incentive or punishment for the offender, and by viewing the offenders as parents and not just prisoners – tick-box responses such as occasional family days or the employment of a sole family worker are an insufficient response.

Case Study: Invisible Walls Wales at HMP Parc

Aims

The three aims of Invisible Walls Wales (IWW) are to reduce the risk of reoffending, reduce the risk of intergenerational offending, and reduce the social exclusion of families in the local community.

Insight

The risk of reoffending for those who receive visits from family members during their sentence is 39% less compared to those who do not receive visits.⁶⁸ Maintaining family ties is therefore a crucial factor in the rehabilitation of offenders, and in breaking the cycle of crime across generations. IWW's three aims are all underpinned by the same principles – the offenders and families are involved in the interventions, which aim to support them both (i.e. the benefits are not solely seen from the perspective of the offender).

Reform

IWW was established in HMP & YOI Parc in 2012 following the opening of the UK's first dedicated family interventions unit for male prisoners in 2010. The unit supports prisoners who are willing to make a change, as well as their families on the outside. Prison visits are seen as an opportunity for rehabilitation – this required a change in prison culture to maximise the opportunities for engagement of the whole family. Prisoners have access to a large number of family interventions e.g. a parents' evening which takes place every term in the visit hall so fathers can stay properly linked in with their children's progress at school.

Outcome

School attendance of children from supported families has increased, and not one child was assessed as 'isolated' from their peers at school or in their community upon leaving the project. In addition, 77% of offenders at HMP Parc receive visits compared to a national average of 48%.

⁶⁸ May C., Sharma N., & Stewart D., (2008). *Factors linked to reoffending: a one-year follow-up of prisoners who took part in the Resettlement Surveys 2001, 2003 and 2004*. London: Ministry of Justice.

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In summary, despite the many positive outcomes of the Farmer review within prisons, the focus and aims of prison interventions remain on the reduction of the parent's reoffending risk, as opposed to reducing negative outcomes for their children. This risks children being used as pawns in their parents' rehabilitation, and their needs and negative outcomes being ignored as a result. This is particularly true in cases where maintaining family ties with a family member during their prison sentence, and upon their release, may be detrimental rather than beneficial to the family as a whole.

The perspective from the outside looking in

An argument put to us was that to separately identify children of prisoners is unnecessary because such children will be picked up through existing disadvantages or difficulties which often characterise offending behaviour – such as substance abuse, domestic abuse, or a background of care. However, this overlooks the evidence cited in earlier chapters regarding the particular experience of parental imprisonment and the associated effects on the outcomes of children.

As part of this research we spoke to those working in local authority Early Help and Troubled Families settings who were clear that:

- **Self-disclosure does not adequately safeguard children;**
- **There is a need to work specifically with families of prisoners due to their particularly adverse outcomes and specific circumstances;**
- **They have undertaken work to try to reach into custodial settings to develop a whole family approach; but**
- **These attempts were hindered by a number of different challenges and blockers.**

The lack of systematic identification of children of prisoners means that they are being sidelined and remain unsupported, despite being highly vulnerable. While families have anxieties about receiving help from statutory agencies on the basis this might increase the risk of their children being taken into care, much can be achieved by being persistent and demonstrating to families that you are on their side, working with their priorities. Rather than highlight the child protection aspects of support, it should be seen and communicated as early help, emphasising the aim of ensuring the family stays as a unit.

Case Study: Hampshire County Council

Hampshire County Council used funding from their Troubled Families Innovation Grant to support the development of the Invisible Walls family support service at HMP/YOI Winchester, run by Spurgeons children's charity. HMP/YOI Winchester is a local category B/C prison serving a wide geographical area including Hampshire, Dorset, Wiltshire and the Isle of Wight, following the closure of a number of other prisons in the region since 2013.

Invisible Walls works in close partnership with the prison and a variety of internal and external agencies, including the local authorities, to support fathers in custody and their families in a range of ways. Those delivering the service spoke of the difficulties in identifying local Hampshire men within the prison whose families met the criteria for Troubled Families support and were willing, or in a position for their family to be referred. While the fathers in prison were able to build positive relationships with Spurgeons keyworkers and access support to help them maintain their family relationships from custody, they tended to be reluctant to accept additional agency support for their families in the community. Worries about children being taken into care and a general lack of trust in working with professionals were cited as contributing factors.

Invisible Walls casework includes a high percentage of families where there is already significant and ongoing children's services involvement. Children subject to a child protection plan, child in need plan, or care proceedings, are over and above the Troubled Families threshold – this also contributed to a lack of direct referrals from the prison.

Those we spoke to who worked in Hampshire and HMP/YOI Winchester also spoke of an increase in the proportion of families in crisis they were working with, whilst at the same time, community services have shrunk significantly, adding to the pressures and difficulties of their work. As a result, Spurgeon's work for Invisible Walls is shifting towards more complex family work at a later stage of intervention.

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A number of schemes were developed by those working in early help settings that aimed to identify and support families of offenders. These included putting 'family link' or early help caseworkers in prisons and in visitors' centres, and seconding a prison officer into a troubled families team. However, it was reported that supporting families of offenders is a particularly challenging area of work, with joint working with prisons being extremely difficult.

A reluctance to share information and data between agencies was a common challenge that affected attempted joint working between early help initiatives and prisons. A number of different agencies collect information on offenders and their children (both statutory e.g. NPS, CRC, DWP, and voluntary/third-sector e.g. housing or substance misuse agencies), however, this information is not routinely or easily shared. A number of attempts were made to break down siloed ways of working, and to share information for more effective interventions, however none of these had proved successful. This is despite well-established and functioning inter-agency information sharing infrastructure being a core part of early help programmes. There was a reported lack of engagement from CRCs and NPS in particular.



Case Study: Liverpool City Council Families Programme

Liverpool City Council have attempted a range of local initiatives to connect early help and support for families of offenders. This has included developing a Liverpool City region group of stakeholders involving troubled families leads to identify and connect families of offenders into early help and support, an 'offender journey review', and placing a family link worker in HMP Liverpool.

The data held as part of the Families Programme identifies arrest data within families, and multiple local datasets to build a picture of the difficulties and interventions which families are experiencing, but does not have the vital link of court, prison or probation data. Therefore, Liverpool City Council have been unable to quantify the number of children affected by parental imprisonment in the area.

An offender journey review undertaken by the troubled families team in 2016 aimed to:

- Review the current processes for dealing with offenders throughout the criminal justice journey;
- Identify current methods of providing support to offenders and their families and opportunities to improve this support; and
- Review information and data sharing arrangements used by agencies during the offender journey.

The review identified police arrests, courts and prisons as potential areas to link up early help services for families, but identified the lack of support for families of offenders at all of these touchpoints. A further issue was that many agencies were using lots of different systems for storing data and information, leading to the duplication of information without sharing.

The Families Programme part-funded a family link worker in HMP Liverpool to identify offenders with families as they were being screened, and to introduce them to the early help services across the region. However, the questions asked at initial screening were very factual and did not draw out any help requirements or concerns, partly due to a lack of knowledge of early help support from prison staff. The family link worker was therefore moved to the visitors' centre. However this presented a different set of problems, as the link worker was pulled into the day-to-day practical problems around prison visits. Families undergoing the stresses of a prison visit often did not have the capacity to think about wider needs and were preoccupied with practical issues, such as the correct forms of ID needed to register for a visit; keeping their children calm throughout the search process; or how they would get from the prison to the train station after the visit, etc.

Overall, Liverpool City Council's initiatives highlighted what a challenging area families of offenders is to work within. Some key learnings identified from their work included:

- Interventions for families of offenders do not happen early enough
- Families need information regarding access to prison visits and where to access family support at the point of custody or court sentencing
- Families need support in their community, with time to build rapport and trust

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The reluctance to share data may in part be due to a lack of common purpose among agencies about recognising and addressing family needs. The lack of understanding of family needs and how to support them was reflected in difficulties with prison visits from both a school and prison perspective. Schools would often not recognise prison visits as 'authorised absence', and prison visiting times are limited and almost always occur during school hours. Those we spoke to argued in favour of longer visiting times to reflect distance travelled, and more options to visit outside school hours. Overall, the inflexibility of the prison regime reflected offenders being seen only as offenders, and not as part of a wider family network.

It was argued that interventions should be preventative and supportive, with early help approaches being embedded into the prison and probation service. An example of this in practice was the an initiative involving the introduction of family group conferencing with offenders in Middlesbrough, which involved the offender and the whole family coming together to address resilience, roles, action planning, and behaviour changes to improve the current family situation. The conferences take a solution-focused approach, with the aim of managing problems. This was reported to be very successful, however there is a lack of empirical research looking into associated outcomes, and family conferencing is not routinely offered in prisons nationally. A broader roll out would depend on having the prison 'on side' and aware of family needs, as family conferencing requires flexibility and organisation.

Case Study: Middlesbrough Council

Middlesbrough Local Authority seconded a prison officer from HMP Holme House to the troubled families team for two years. The original intention of the seconded officer's role was to facilitate data sharing as the local authority were finding it very difficult to identify prisoners who were coming up for release. The role was subsequently developed to include talking to families and agencies, liaising with social workers, mental health workers, the troubled families early help scheme, and attending case conferences.

The process for identifying families of prisoners was described as slow and laborious due to the prison systems, however the initiative did result in some families being identified, many of which were not being supported by any agencies. Middlesbrough Council worked with the DWP, and NEPACS (the charity who runs the visitors' centre), who both identified at risk families for the local authority. However, the troubled families team were still required to assess each referral to determine whether they needed to be admitted to the programme, with not every family needing support. The team is working towards a way of identifying families of offenders in need of support which is more systematic and less time-consuming.

The initiative ended after two years. However, the troubled families team have made a number of contacts within the prison who will now share information around prisoner and family needs and they are keen to develop the work further.

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Summary

The criminal justice system remains constrained by its short sightedness, with a focus on only the offender and 'community' children services. Outside the criminal justice system, we are familiar with the charge that services work in silos, seeing only their service and the 'bit' of the person that their service deals with. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the case of children of prisoners, with no particular national body or group currently taking responsibility for them, and a distinct lack of whole family support.

This is despite the fact that a whole family approach is mutually beneficial for all agencies involved in the criminal justice system, and agencies outside the criminal justice system that deal with offenders' children. As a result, despite numerous opportunities to trigger assessments and interventions, support is often fragmented, short-term, narrow in scope, made in isolation, not timed optimally, or lacks continuity.

We need shared objectives in recognition of the mutual benefits of maintaining family ties to offender and child alike, to incentivise joint working between children's social care, the criminal justice and education systems. Only through effective joint working can interventions be better integrated and offered at all points of the criminal justice system, with an emphasis on early intervention.

There are a number of challenges associated with building a more integrated system, however, there are a plethora of strong arguments for joint working to support children of prisoners, with associated benefits and cost savings for all agencies involved. The following chapter outlines the principles that should underpin effective and integrated support provisions for children of prisoners, and applies these to a list of achievable recommendations.

6

Conclusions and recommendations

This is not the first report to highlight the plight of children of prisoners or call for a more joined up system. However, this is a unique attempt to look at the issue systemically, by taking a whole system approach. Our fieldwork points to a number of innovative initiatives happening across the country, but also highlights the inherent difficulties in taking a whole family approach to support children of prisoners. Our new estimate of the number of children affected by parental imprisonment should be a wake up call, showing that something needs to be done to remove the numerous challenges and blockers that currently exist in the system.

We have seen in this report how both the criminal justice system on one side and local authorities and schools on the other, are collectively failing children of prisoners. There is a policy vacuum around this vulnerable group of children and arrangements for their care and support still fall largely to the voluntary and community sector. While they are providing excellent services individually, and have built significant expertise over time, their presence does not conceal what is effectively a systemic failure of public services to find a way to join up their systems.

Effectively supporting the families of prisoners while the offender is in custody and as part of resettlement arrangements is not only one of the key levers available to reduce recidivism, it also offers an early opportunity to reduce the likelihood of children going on to commit crime, to halt the cycle of intergenerational offending. Interventions should therefore be as focused on the child of the offender as they are on the offender himself/herself. Interventions which are successful in decreasing the rate of children who subsequently offend due to factors relating to their family and upbringing, would create significant long-term benefits for crime prevention.

What does 'good' look like?

Despite an overall lack of awareness and support for children of prisoners, examples of good practice exist all across the UK. The common principles underlying these examples, as well as findings from relevant research studies and discussions with groups and individuals currently supporting children of prisoners, can together inform the development of further effective services and interventions.

Identify children of prisoners

Without knowing who these children are, they cannot be offered help, nor can the scale of need and the type of provision needed be accurately assessed. We were told on several occasions that schools often denied having children with parents in prison in their schools.

Services have worked around the the lack of systematic identification by encouraging self-disclosure amongst children of prisoners and their parents, working closely with them to increase their confidence that they are there to help and support, and do not want to remove their children. While it is important to build trust and confidence among families, this cannot be a substitute for a system which systematically identifies such a potentially important moment in a child's life.

Intervene early

Research looking at children and families with adverse childhood experiences has consistently demonstrated the effectiveness of early intervention in improving the outcomes of children and young people, compared with responding to problems once they emerge. In practice however, early help services are unlikely to get involved until problems emerge. We argue that the sentencing of an adult with children to custody is a red flag: for many families with a parent in prison, this will not be the first or isolated custodial experience, and the evidence points toward custody not being the only adverse experience that is likely to have affected the families of prisoners.

Importance of whole family support

The research literature has consistently highlighted that families of prisoners have numerous and complex needs and that a whole family approach which addresses these complex and interrelated needs is the most effective way of tackling problems. The vital issue is that the whole family should include both the parent in custody as well as the family outside.

The Farmer review has gone a long way to make prisons more family friendly and to recognise the value of family work to rehabilitation. Practitioners pointed out that it is of limited use for local authorities to know that a parent is in prison for the purposes of taking a whole family approach unless the prison is willing to work with early help services on the outside. However, there remains a significant challenge in joining up prison services with the outside.

Troubled families teams had struggled with sharing information about prisoner needs and circumstances with prison authorities – working within a prison regime did not often allow for whole family meetings, nor identifying release dates to prioritise which prisoners to work with. Such practical problems meant that they were unable to get involved in sentence planning and this persisted into the community setting where probation services were rarely engaged with ongoing family work.

Flexible and targeted support which lasts for as long as necessary

Services need to be flexible and adapt to the family's evolving circumstances: trust needs to be built at the outset and therefore services need to respond to the family's priorities which may include arranging visits or dealing with benefits and housing in the first instance. However, over time, and as trust builds, other needs might emerge which widen the interventions needed.

Practitioners reported how different children found different parts of the criminal justice process traumatic – for some, arrest had the most traumatic impact, for others, when their parent didn't return home after court, or visiting a parent in prison, or their parent's release. As a result, a family's presenting issues at one point in the criminal justice journey may look very different to their presenting issues at another point. In addition, there are many moderating factors (as discussed in the second chapter) which will affect how children and their families might react to parental imprisonment.

Family support services and schools on the 'outside' need to respond to these situations and therefore require a greater understanding of how and when services might be offered. Schools are well placed to act as a focal point for support and guidance to pupils who have a parent or close relative in prison; Barnardo's has called for a designated school lead to hold responsibility for children of prisoners.⁶⁹ Whether this is practical or not, the kind of support services which are growing in schools (such as School-Home Support or Place2Be) are already providing vital support to teachers and to children and families who have a parent or close relative in prison.



⁶⁹ Barnardo's (2014). Children affected by the imprisonment of a family member: A handbook for schools developing good practice. Available at: http://www.barnardos.org.uk/welsh_schools_handbook_english.pdf

Recommendations

Numerous reviews of children of prisoners have concluded that although exceptional instances of good practice exist in various local areas of the criminal justice, education, social care and other sectors, these are isolated examples, which are not bolstered by any overarching national policy. National policy guidelines for children of prisoners is needed which both identifies children of prisoners as a specific group, and designates accountability for supporting them across DfE, MOJ and DWP. This cross-departmental responsibility and guidance would help avoid the policy and departmental drift for these children, reflected in their current status as a group who are not specifically accounted for in policy and strategy.

A cross-government strategy for the care and support of children of prisoners to implement the following:

Recommendation 1. A system to identify children of prisoners via arrangements between local authorities and the courts, so that children of prisoners are identified and their needs assessed at the point of sentence.

- Develop systematic arrangements for the identification of children of prisoners at the point of sentence
- Local authorities should develop arrangements with every court in their area to receive information about the sentencing of adults with children
- Identification of children of prisoners should be followed by an assessment of the support needs of the child(ren), with relevant information being shared between agencies, especially in nursery, primary and secondary school settings
- Extend Operation Encompass so that police notify schools where an arrest (for any crime, not just domestic violence) is made at a house with dependent children

6. Conclusions and recommendations

Recommendation 2. Greater integration between local authorities, prisons and probation services to address the needs of prisoners' families.

- Use the existing infrastructure established by troubled families programmes to develop local arrangements to support families with parents in prison
- Families of prisoners should be a priority for early help services or troubled families programme arrangements
- Family support arrangements should reflect and account for the fact that families may resist help and will need an assertive approach to develop trust and confidence in services
- Prisons, courts and probation services should be part of local partnership arrangements, and develop shared objectives around improving outcomes for families of offenders
- Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) should provide awareness raising and training around the needs of children of prisoners

Recommendation 3. A greater effort in the courts to identify where a convicted person has dependent children.

- Requirement for sentencers to give reasons as to why they are sentencing a parent to prison
- Courts should work with the local authority at the point of placing a parent/ carer in custody where there are dependent children

Recommendation 4. Revision of CRC and NPS contracts to include a greater emphasis on family support.

- CRC contracts should be revised to include requirements around whole family support to incentivise engagement with local partnerships
- Through the Gate provision should also emphasise the role of whole family work as a vital component in rehabilitation
- Prisoner intelligence notification system (PINS; which is used to proactively notify a number of agencies of an offender's release) should be used at the point of charging, before a parent goes to prison (as well as at the point of release)

Recommendation 5. Drive forward reform in prisons in line with the Farmer review's recommendations.

- Prison visits should be seen as an important opportunity to promote family bonds (meaning the prisoner and their children) rather than an incentive or punishment for offenders
- Both male and female prisoners should have a basic level of visitation rights if they have children
- Rehabilitation based on family ties should be entirely separated from offender behaviour
- Bring male IEP system (regarding visits) in line with the female system
- As part of any decision concerning prisoner transfers, governors should be required to produce a family impact assessment that considers the proximity of prisoners to their families
- Prison governors should have a responsibility for the children of the people in their prison, and should be accountable for the safeguarding of prisoners' children and families

6. Conclusions and recommendations

Recommendation 6. Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to develop justice devolution arrangements that aim to improve outcomes for children of prisoners, framed around reducing intergenerational offending.

- PCCs should consider how cementing local arrangements for prisons, probation, local authorities and schools to provide good quality family support can reduce reoffending in this generation and the next

Recommendation 7. A £20M Prevention of Intergenerational Offending fund to support the rollout of a national strategy.

- A funding pot (worth £65 for every child who has a parent in custody) should be made available for pilot schemes to develop whole family approaches between prisoner and early help services

These recommendations add up to a radical but realistic package of measures, which would transform outcomes for children of prisoners and ultimately reduce the future likelihood of crime and reoffending.

APPENDIX A:

Data simulation methodology

What do we know about the rates or proportions of prisoners with children?

There are three factors on which it would be necessary to have information in order to be able to make appropriate estimates of the number of children involved:

- a. The proportion of prisoners with children⁷⁰
- b. The number of children for each prisoner
- c. The age distribution of dependent children

In addition, (c) can provide the age structure to better inform service development and commissioning. A summary of the information about these factors, available in the literature, is given in the next three sections.

Proportion of prisoners with children

Table 1 shows the proportions of those living in households in England and Wales with dependent children. The data are drawn from Household Surveys in England & Wales.⁷¹ The information spans from 1996 to 2017 and is summarised here in the form of minimum and maximum rates, along with the 2017 rates. It can be seen that there is little variation over the past 21 years in these rates, with interval spans of less than 0.03, therefore use of these rates would appear to hold good for the near future. Those sent to prison will be drawn from this general population. While we cannot be sure that the distribution for parental responsibility of those sent to prison is exactly the same as that for the general population, the general distribution is expected to be a good approximation.⁷²

⁷⁰ This includes all children where the prisoner would have a parental responsibility, e.g. step-children

⁷¹ Statistical bulletin: Families and Households: 2017. Available online: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/families/bulletins/familiesandhouseholds/2017>

⁷² See, for example, Figure 1, which compares the relevant data from a number of sources.

Table 1. Fractions of those who live in households in England and Wales with dependent children. Min/Max differences refer to the variation in these proportions over the period 1996 to 2017

Responsibility level	Min. rates	Max. rates	Difference	2017 rate
With dependent children	0.542221046	0.56613449	0.023913444	0.541729
0 children	0.43386551	0.458252318	0.024386809	0.458252
1 to 2 children	0.445562411	0.456536388	0.010973977	0.442155
3+ children	0.092473621	0.118296759	0.025823139	0.099574

Results from the 2003 Resettlement survey⁷³ show the following proportions:

- 50% of all female prisoners had dependent children
- 48% of adult males had dependent children
- 20% of young offenders had dependent children

Results from the Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction (SPCR)⁷⁴ longitudinal cohort study of prisoners estimate that the proportion of prisoners who were parents in England and Wales was 54% and for young offenders (<21)⁷⁵ was 20%.

Survey estimates published by the US Bureau of Justice statistics on state and federal prisoners are summarised in Table 2. The table shows the range of estimated proportions from surveys of state and federal prisons for all inmates, along with the age breakdown of the prisoners.

⁷³ Niven, S. & Stewart D. 2005 Home Office Research findings no. 248; Home Office, London. Available online: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110218143221/http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs05/r248.pdf>

⁷⁴ Prisoners' childhood and family backgrounds Results from the Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction (SPCR) longitudinal cohort study of prisoners. Available online: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/278837/prisoners-childhood-family-backgrounds.pdf

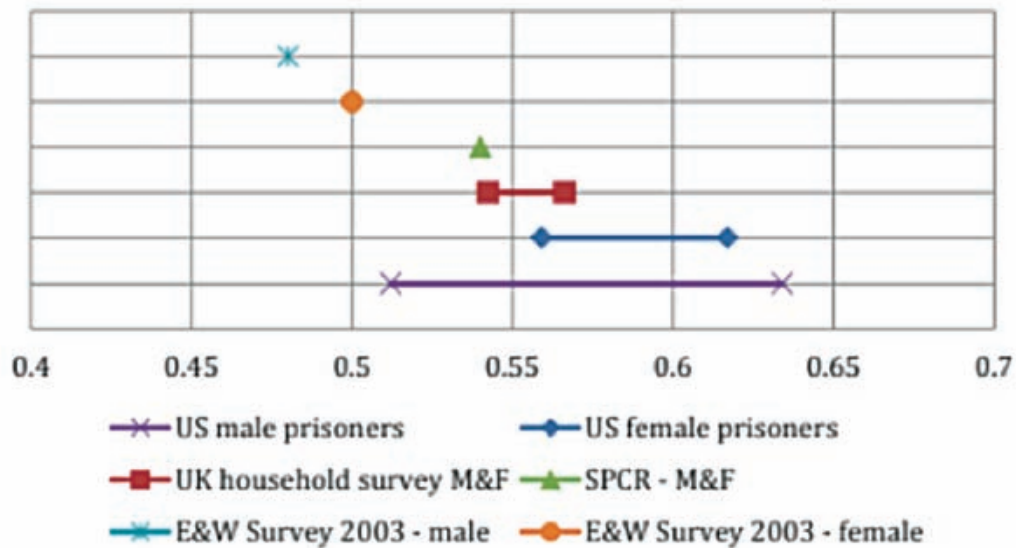
⁷⁵ Undefined in the report but assumed here to be <21

Table 2. Range of the proportion of state and federal inmates who were parents of minor children, by age and gender

Age of inmates	Male	Female
24 or younger	0.435-0.457	0.475-0.554
25-34	0.633-0.741	0.745-0.807
35-44	0.583-0.721	0.657-0.682
45-54	0.314-0.483	0.258-0.312
55+	0.129-0.253	0.000
All inmates	0.512-0.634	0.559-0.617

Figure 1 shows the range estimated values for the proportion of prisoners with minor children.

Figure 1. Range of estimated values of the proportion of prisoners with minor children.



Number of children

Figure 2 shows the distribution⁷⁶ of the proportion of US prisoners with 0-6+ children.

Figure 2. Fraction of prisoners with children (minor) in US prisons

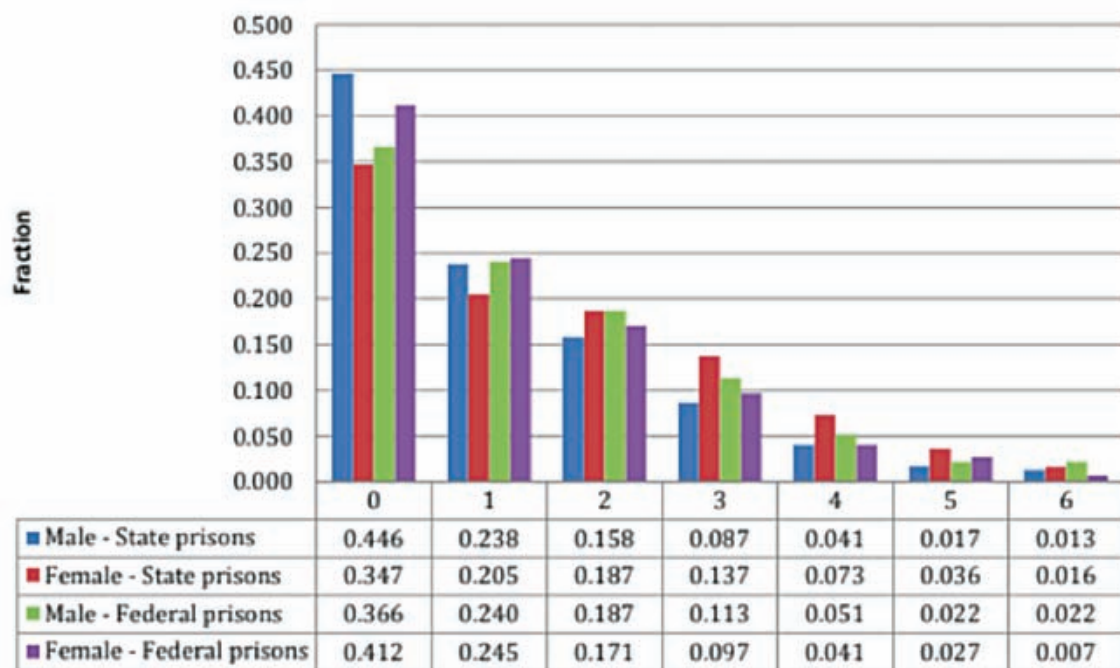


Table 3 shows the reported average number of children with a parent in US prisons from a number of surveys. The averages show small variations across the survey years: there are some systematic differences across years and type of prison: a gradual growth in the average of the total category, by about 0.018 over a period of 16 years; and larger differences between state and federal prisons, ~0.17.

It is useful to compare the figure given in the results of the SPCR survey, of an average 2.1 children for prisoners with children in England & Wales. This number is almost identical with the results of the more recent (c. 2007) US results in Table 3, suggesting that the UK & US estimates would be statistically similar, at least with respect to the average.

⁷⁶ The data are drawn from the Bureau of Justice statistics, special report, "Incarcerated parents and their children", August 2000.

Table 3. Average number of children (minor) of parents in state and federal prisons

Survey date	Total	State	Federal
2007	2.1074	2.0809	2.2544
2004	2.1064	2.0809	2.2545
1999	2.1001	2.0845	2.2260
1997	2.0984	2.1169	2.2256
1991	2.0897	2.0825	2.1599

Children's age distribution

Table 4 provides information about the age distribution of children with a parent in US prisons.

Table 4. Age distribution (in %) of minor children with a parent in US prisons⁷⁷

Age of minor child	State prisons			Federal prisons		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
<1 year	2.4	2.5	1.6	0.7	0.7	1.1
1-4 years	20.0	20.3	16.7	15.1	15.3	12.6
5-9 years	30.2	30.3	29.1	33.8	34.0	30.1
10-14 years	31.6	31.4	33.8	35.1	35.0	35.8
15-17 years	15.8	15.5	18.8	15.3	15.0	20.4

⁷⁷ Figures from Bureau of Justice statistics, special report, Parents in prison and their minor children, August 2008, Revised March 2010. Available online: <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/pptmc.pdf>

Methodology for estimating prevalence

It should be noted that the studies reported earlier are not always very clear about the character of the sample of prisoners that was surveyed – that is to say on admission, prisoners held irrespective of date of admission, or on release. In particular, the US data appear to be based on the (then) current prison populations in state and federal prisons. Plainly we do not know that the distributions will be the same, and for estimates relating to sentenced prisoners, the length of sentence will materially affect the question of whether they are the parent of a minor child. Most offenders sentenced to prison serve short sentences and form a relatively small fraction of the prison population at any one time. This means that a survey based on the prison stock may misrepresent the distribution describing prisoners on admission. Nevertheless, the paucity of data, and taking a meta-analysis or evidence synthesis view point, suggest treating these various rates as essentially applicable to the estimates being sought.

There are two ways to present the number of children who have experienced having a parent in prison:

- **Point prevalence** which counts the number of children with a parent in prison, at any one point in time
 - This, in effect, takes a snapshot of the prison population and establishes the number of children
- **Cumulative prevalence** is based on the flow of offenders coming into prison, on remand, on sentence or on recall (following a breach of licence conditions),⁷⁸ over a period of time, say 12 months⁷⁹
 - Arguably, from the perspective of commissioning relevant services to support such children, cumulative prevalence would be more relevant since it would give a more rounded view of the number of children that would potentially need to be supported over a period of time

The Justice Episteme CJS model⁸⁰ is able to simulate the flows into custody as well as the size and composition of the prison population. It can provide a breakdown by age, by offending history and keep track of the number of prison episodes at an individual level. Using the rates identified above we can therefore form estimates for both point and cumulative prevalence, based on the various rates identified in this section.

⁷⁸ This number has been increasing in recent years and needs to be included.

⁷⁹ In this exercise each new admission to prison is counted, even though there is a possibility that the same individual is admitted more than once. While it is possible to remove this “discrepancy” (at some programming complications) it was not done in this analysis. However, from another perspective, each episode of imprisonment will have an impact on the children involved, even though in some cases it may be to the same individuals.

⁸⁰ See www.justice-episteme.com

Results

The following cases apply:

- In terms of the **cumulative prevalence** an admission to prison is counted if an offender is remanded, sentenced to custody (not double counting if they had already been remanded and then move on to serving their sentence) or is recalled to prison following a breach of their licence condition
 - The number of children and their age are recorded for each individual offender admitted
- For **point prevalence** the prison population is scanned and the number of children (recorded during the admission phase) is counted, also incorporating maturation until they reach the age of 18
 - This ensures that as prisoners and their dependent children age, the dependency relationship is ended once a child has reached the age of 18

The following analysis provides various alternative estimates based on the England and Wales rates summarised in Figure 1 (augmented in the case of prisoner surveys by the distributions of age and the number of children based on US figures).⁸¹ In particular the following variations are considered:

- a. The rates based on the England & Wales Household Survey – they represent the most up-to-date figures (c. 2017), albeit relating to the general population
- b. The estimated rate drawn from the SPCR survey (c. 2006) + the number of children distribution drawn from (b) – see Table 1⁸²
- c. The England & Wales 2003 prisoner survey, and the number of children distribution drawn from (b) – see Table 1

Figures 3 and 4 present the combined results of the simulations incorporating the three variations listed above. Figures 3.1, 3.2, 4.1 and 4.2 show the individual assessments for each variant, along with the 95% confidence intervals (reflecting the dependence of the estimates on the simulation parameters).

⁸¹ The age distribution rates and distribution for the number of children drawn from US State and Federal prisons. While cases representing the lower and upper bounds of the US ranges could be considered, the lower bounds are most similar to the England and Wales's survey data – see Figure 1 – and so would not produce anything 'new'.

⁸² The estimates from the UK based Household Survey have shown little variation over the past 20 years and we feel that it is permissible to use them, along with the data from the two prisoner surveys which also fall in that period.

Figure 3 shows the results for the cumulative prevalence for the number of dependent children distinguishing between male and female prisoners, and covering the years from 1995 onwards, also projecting to 2040. For simplicity and clarity only the mean projection values are shown. The projections rely on the estimated future flow into prisons. The variants can also be considered as a sensitivity analysis on the underlying distributional assumptions relating to the number and age profiles of dependent children.

Figure 3. Cumulative prevalence – combined view

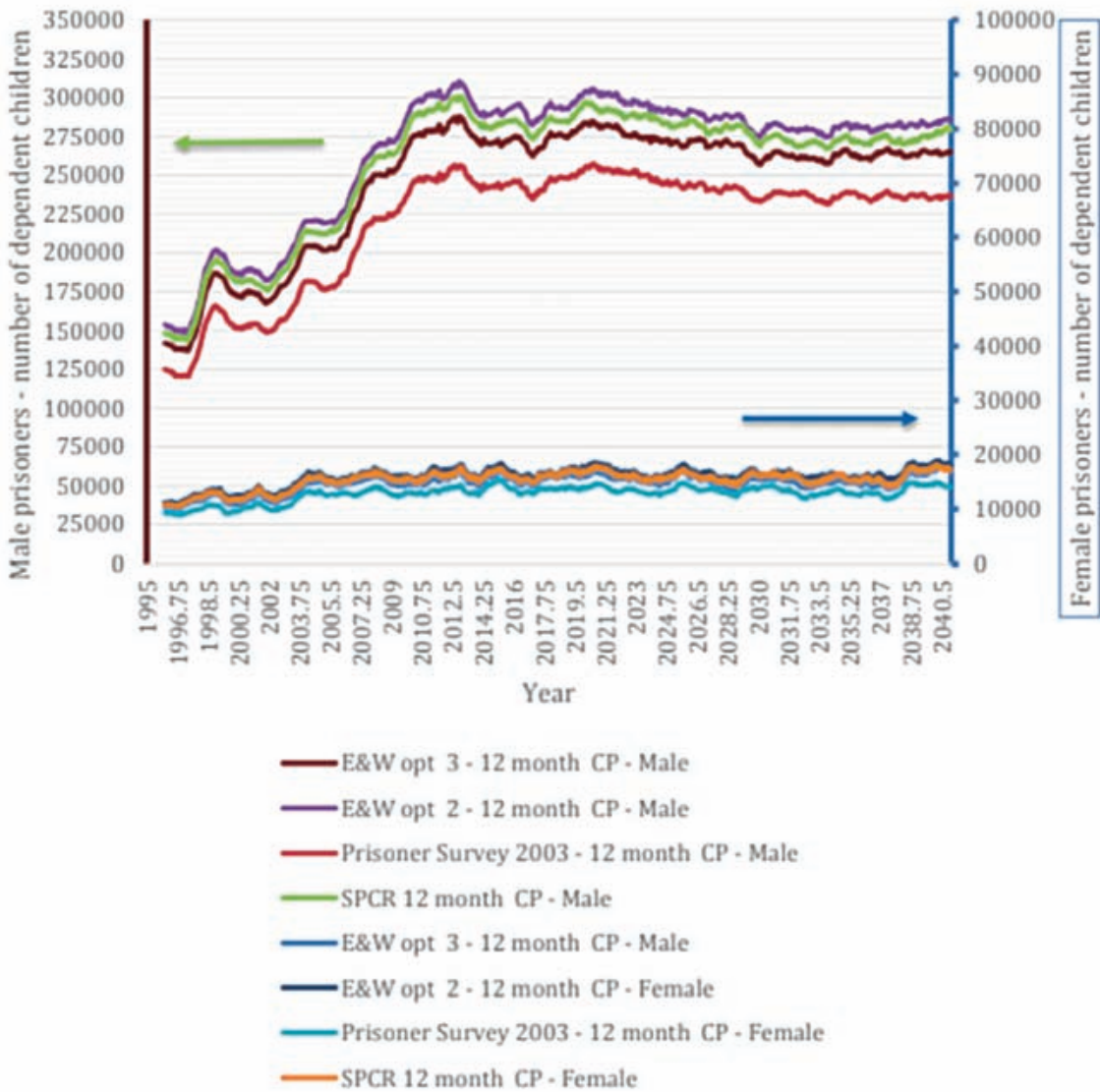


Figure 3.1. Cumulative prevalence SPCR based estimate.

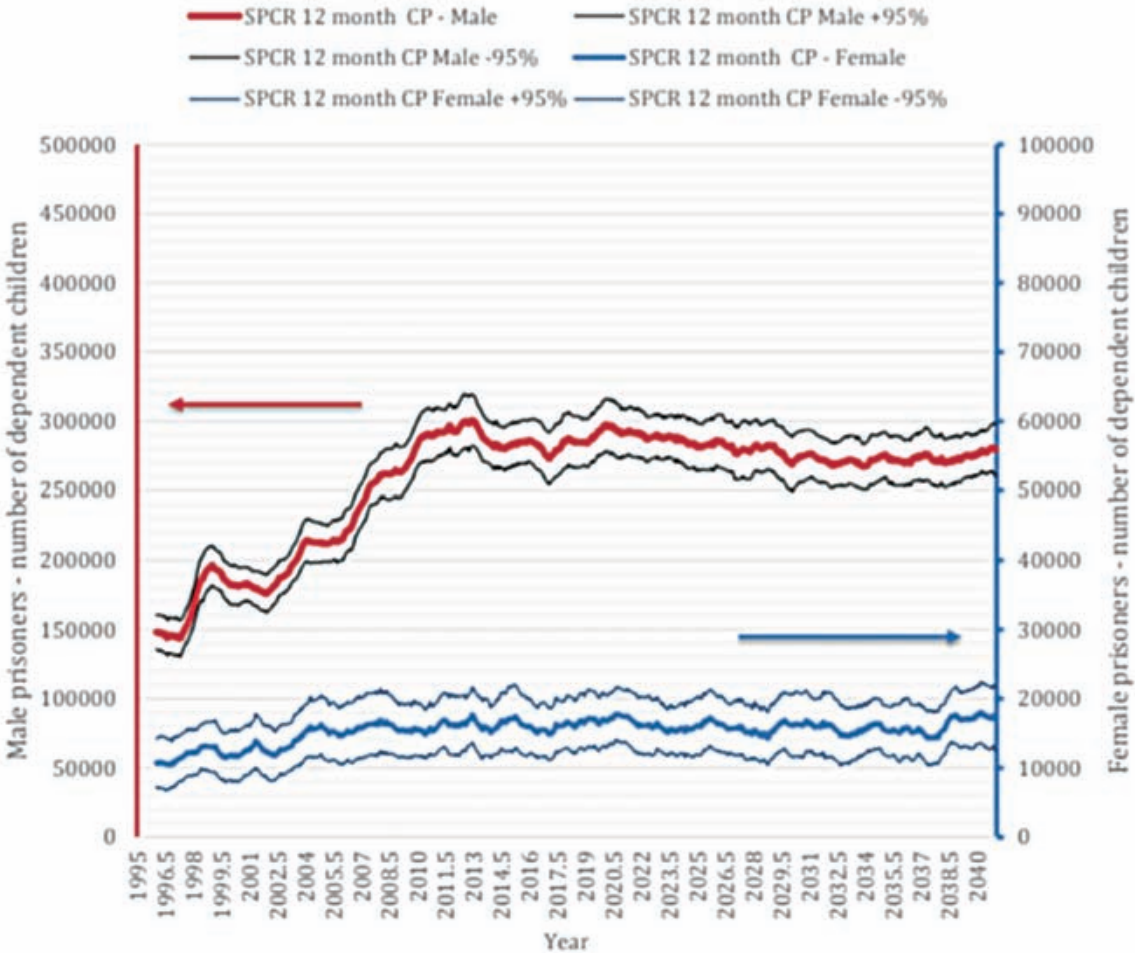
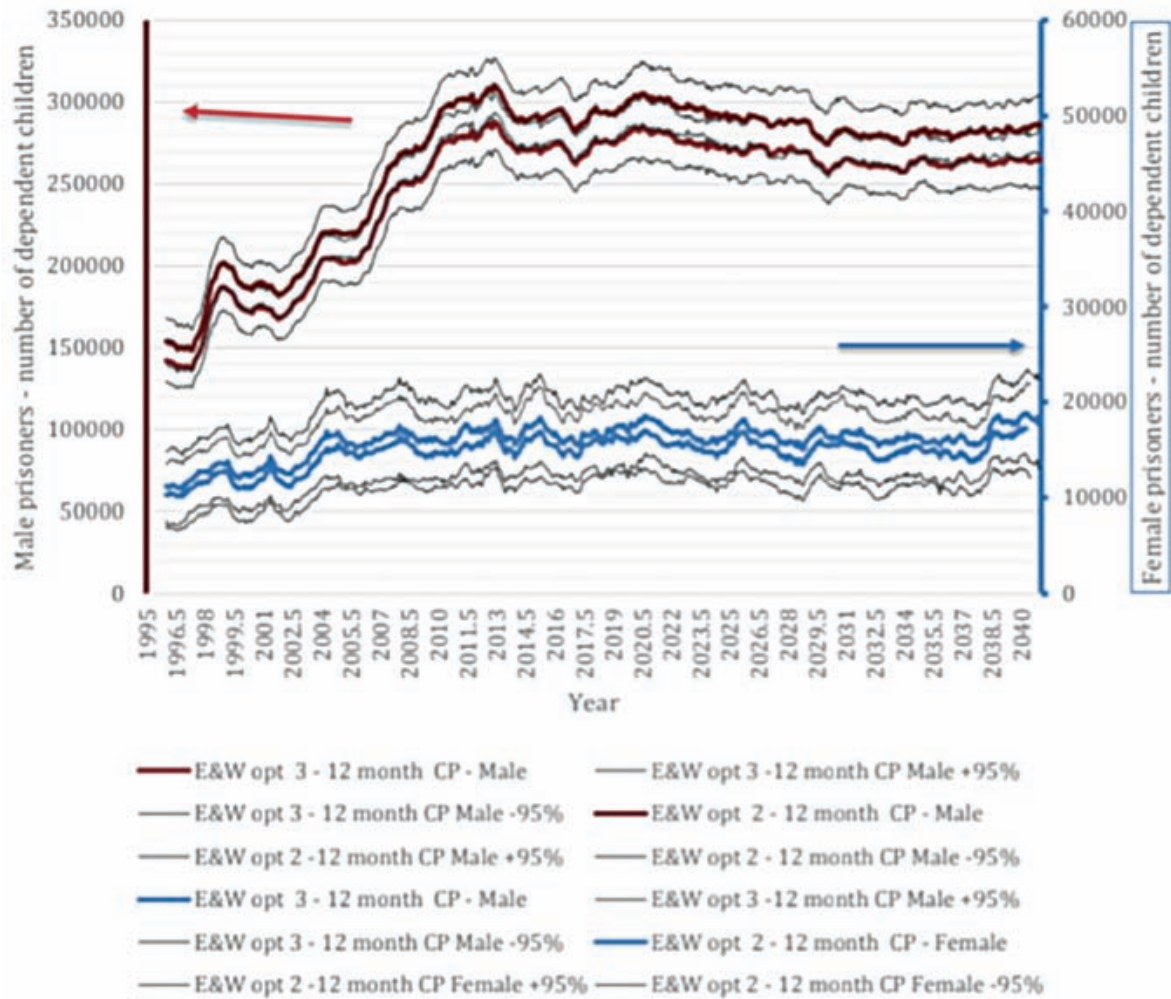


Figure 3.2. Cumulative prevalence – estimates based on England & Wales household survey (2017).



The cumulative prevalence estimates are summarised in Table 5 for the years 2018, 2020 and 2025.

Table 5. Summary annual **cumulative prevalence** rates for the number of dependent children affected by a parent admitted to prison, covering the years 2018, 2020 and 2025.

Variant	Number for male prisoners	Number for female prisoners
SPCR (2006)		
2018	286,000 ±19,000	17,000 ±3,800
2020	297,000 ±19,000	17,000 ±3,700
2025	281,000 ±17,000	16,000 ±4,200
Prisoner survey (2003)		
2018	246,000 ±17,600	13,900 ±3,200
2020	253,000 ±15,500	14,000 ±3,300
2025	243,000 ±15,300	13,600 ±3,500
E&W household survey (opt 3) (2017)		
2018	275,000 ±18,000	16,000 ±3,600
2020	283,000 ±18,000	16,200 ±3,700
2025	270,000 ±17,500	16,000 ±3,800
E&W household survey (opt 2) (2017)		
2018	295,000 ±17,700	17,000 ±3,700
2020	302,500 ±17,500	17,500 ±4,400
2025	290,000 ±19,500	16,900 ±4,100

Figure 4 shows the results for the point prevalence for the number of dependent children distinguishing between male and female prisoners, and covering the years from 1995 onwards, also projecting to 2040. For simplicity and clarity only the mean projection values are shown. The projections rely on the estimated future prison population and its composition in terms of age and gender. The variants can also be considered as a sensitivity analysis on the underlying distribution assumptions relating to the number and age profiles of dependent children.

Figure 4. Point prevalence – combined view

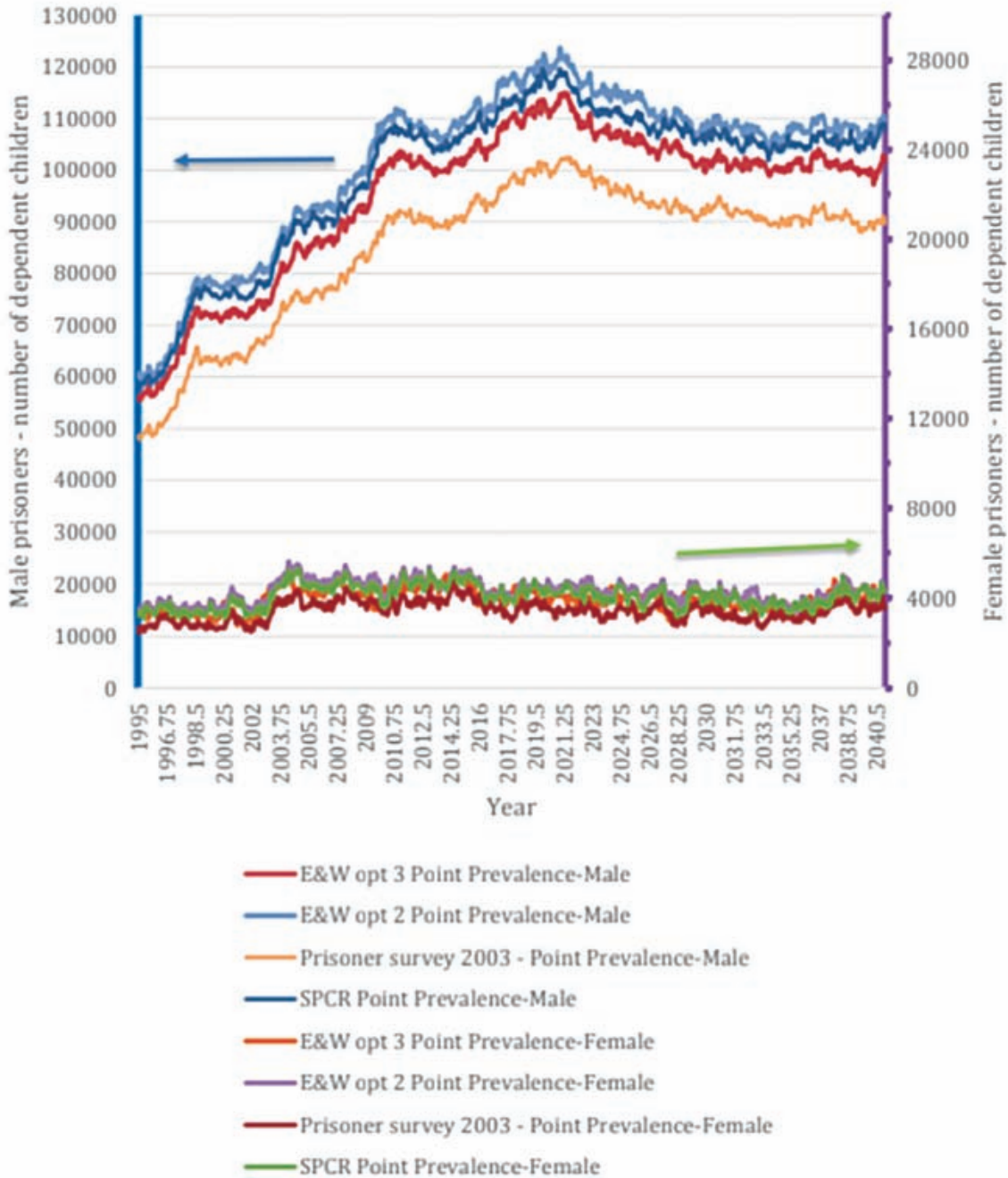
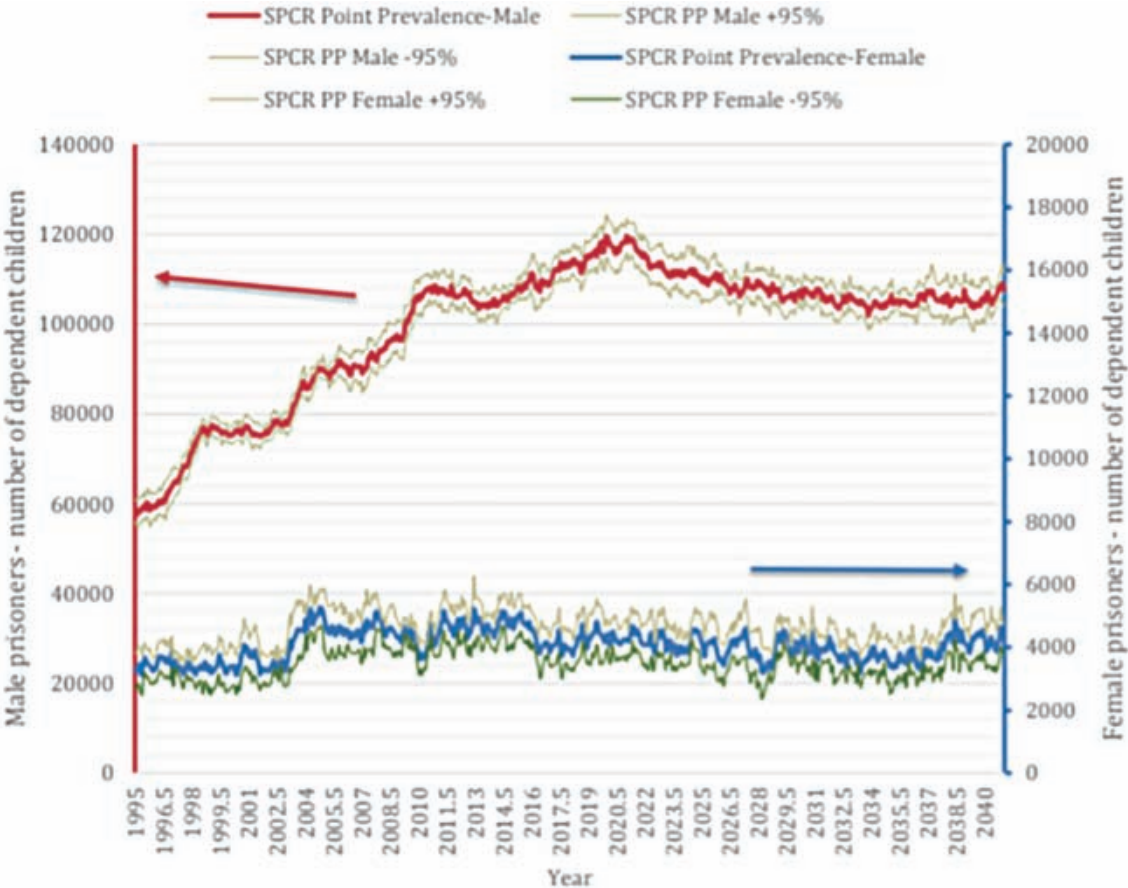
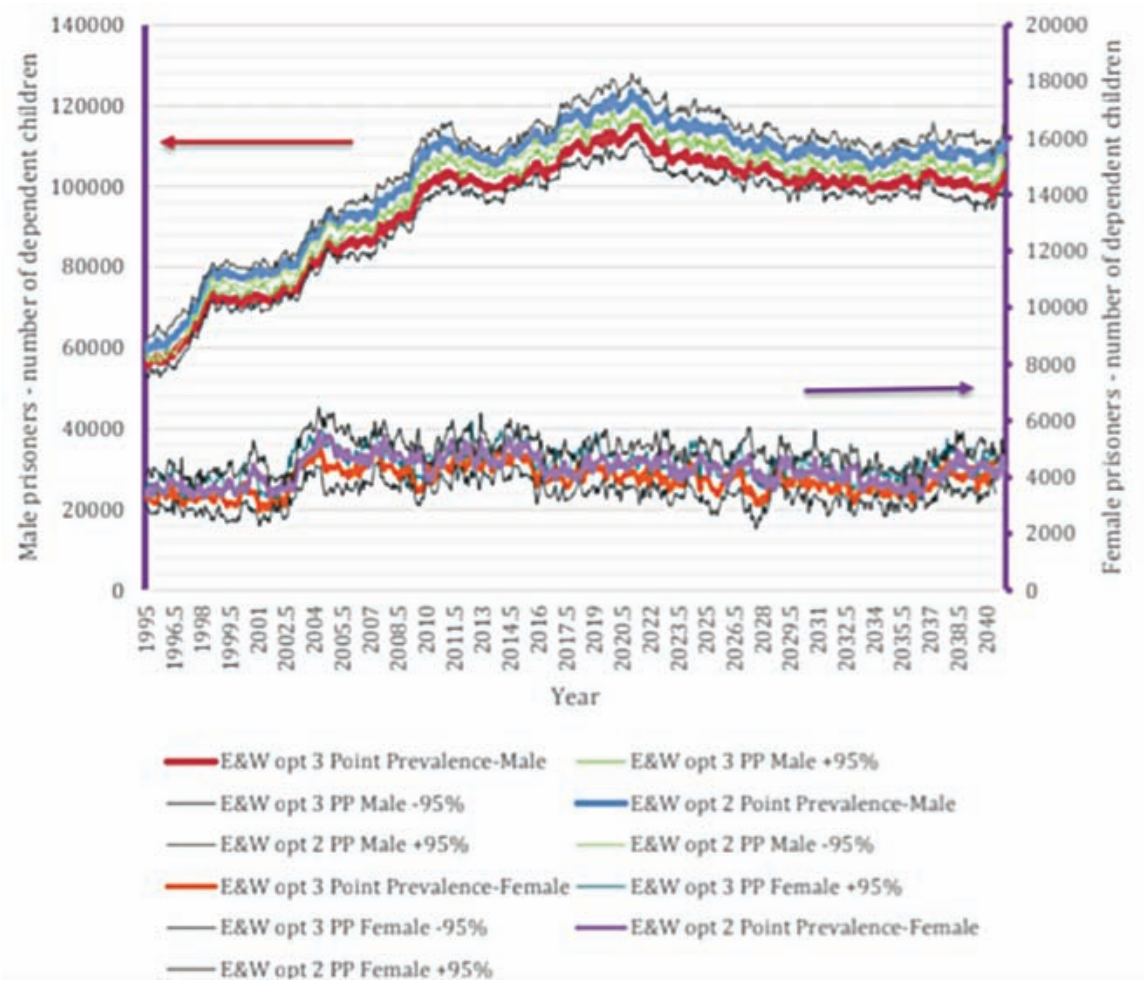


Figure 4.1. Point prevalence SPCR based estimate.



APPENDIX A: Data simulation methodology

Figure 4.2. Point prevalence – estimates based on England & Wales household survey (2017).



The point prevalence estimates are summarised in Table 6 for the years 2018, 2020 and 2025.

Table 6. Summary **point prevalence** rates for the number of dependent children affected by a parent in prison, covering the years 2018, 2020 and 2025.

Variant	Number for male prisoners	Number for female prisoners
SPCR (2006)		
2018	113,000 ±3,000	3,900 ±650
2020	119,000 ±4,400	4,400 ±460
2025	109,000 ±4,900	4,100 ±800
Prisoner survey (2003)		
2018	98,400 ±3,400	3,000 ±430
2020	101,000 ±3,700	3,900 ±450
2025	95,000 ±4,300	3,500 ±570
E&W household survey (opt 3) (2017)		
2018	110,000 ±4,600	4,700 ±580
2020	113,000 ±4,600	4,200 ±550
2025	105,000 ±4,300	4,000 ±940
E&W household survey (opt 2) (2017)		
2018	118,000 ±4,000	4,100 ±700
2020	126,000 ±4,100	4,500 ±450
2025	113,000 ±5,500	4,400 ±720

Discussion

The results from two of the variants – those based on the SPCR survey and the England and Wales Household survey – cluster closer together; those based on the prisoner survey (2003), are somewhat lower. This is in line with the underlying rates on which they are based – see Figure 1.

It is interesting to compare the results derived from the simulation with those previously estimated in the joint Department for Children, Schools and Families/Ministry of Justice Review (2007), based on the 2003 prisoner survey, and in the SPCR report. These give estimates for the cumulative prevalence of 160,000, for 2007 and 200,000⁸³ for 2009. The simulation projections for these two variants and dates are 170,000 and 230,000 respectively (that is the total number of minor children for male and female prisoners), indicating agreement to around ~10%.

The SPCR estimates for point prevalence indicate 86,000 for the end 30 June 2006 (SPCR was conducted in 2005/6), and 93,000 for end of June 2009. The Murray and Farrington estimate was 88,000 children for mid-year 2006.^{84,85} The simulation results were 90,000 to 98,000 for mid-2006 and 100,000 to 110,000 for mid-2009.⁸⁶

⁸³ These relate to unique individuals entering the prison system. See also the comment in footnote 60 concerning the counting method used in the simulation.

⁸⁴ A joint Department for Children, Schools and Families/Ministry of Justice review to consider how to support children of prisoners to achieve better outcomes (June 2007)

⁸⁵ Murray, J., & Farrington, D. P. (2008). The Effects of Parental Imprisonment on Children. *Crime & Just.*, 37, 133-206.

⁸⁶ The 95% confidence intervals ranged between ± 3600 to ± 4200 .

APPENDIX B:

Relevant studies used in the data simulation

A literature search has identified a number of studies from the past 30 years that have looked at the issues of parental imprisonment in England and Wales or in the US. In addition we looked for areas that could provide broader information that is potentially useful in developing an estimate. In the rest of the report we draw in particular on the following documents:

- Resettlement outcomes on release from prison in 2003, Niven, S. and Stewart D. 2005 Home Office Research findings no. 248; Home Office, London⁸⁷
- A joint Department for Children, Schools and Families/Ministry of Justice review to consider how to support children of prisoners to achieve better outcomes, June 2007⁸⁸
- Prisoners' childhood and family backgrounds: Results from the Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction (SPCR) longitudinal cohort study of prisoners, 2012⁸⁹
- Prisoners' children and families: Can the walls be 'invisible'? Evaluation of Invisible Walls Wales, December 2017⁹⁰
 - This is an evaluation of a project based in HMP Parc, South Wales. The project is aimed at "maintaining and improving relationships between male prisoners and their children and families, improving the quality of life of all participants, reducing re-offending by the prisoners, and reducing the risk of 'inter-generational' offending"
- The Effects of Parental Imprisonment on Children, Joseph Murray and David P. Farrington (2008)⁹¹
 - This is a review essay summarising, among other things, what is known about the numbers of children experiencing parental imprisonment in the United States and in England and Wales

⁸⁷ Niven, S., & Stewart D. (2005). Home Office Research findings no. 248. London: Home Office. Available at: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110218143221/http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs05/r248.pdf>

⁸⁸ A joint Department for Children, Schools and Families/Ministry of Justice review to consider how to support children of prisoners to achieve better outcomes (June 2007)

⁸⁹ Prisoners' childhood and family backgrounds. Results from the Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction (SPCR) longitudinal cohort study of prisoners. Available online: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/278837/prisoners-childhood-family-backgrounds.pdf

⁹⁰ Available online: <https://icpa.ca/library/prisoners-children-and-families-can-the-walls-be-invisible-evaluation-of-invisible-walls-wales/>

⁹¹ Murray, J., & Farrington, D. P. (2008). The Effects of Parental Imprisonment on Children. *Crime & Just.*, 37, 133-206.

- The US Department of Justice:
 - Bureau of Justice statistics, special report, Incarcerated parents and their children, August 2000⁹²
 - Bureau of Justice statistics, special report, Parents in prison and their minor children, August 2008, Revised March 2010⁹³
 - Both of these reports contain information about the proportion of those imprisoned that have minor children, categorised by gender, and by state or federal prison
 - They also have information about the age distribution of minor children which potentially helps give more structure to the estimates of size and potential need for educational and social services
- Household Surveys in England & Wales⁹⁴ also provide relevant data – in particular the characteristics of households including dependent children about the general population in households (including lone parents)



⁹² Available online: <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/iptc.pdf>

⁹³ Available online: <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/pptmc.pdf>

⁹⁴ Statistical bulletin: Families and Households: 2017. Available online: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/families/bulletins/familiesandhouseholds/2017>

