

Supporting prisoners' families

How Barnardo's works to improve outcomes for children with a parent in prison

Believe in children



Barnardo's

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“Timely intervention can contribute to improving future outcomes and breaking the cyclical nature of offending that exists in many families.”

Foreword

Children who have a parent in prison¹ are more likely than others to experience poverty, mental ill health, poor housing and other negative outcomes. Timely intervention not only addresses the immediate needs of this vulnerable group, but can contribute to improving future outcomes and breaking the cyclical nature of offending that exists in many families.

Barnardo's has been working in prisons and the community, with the children and families of offenders for over 10 years. This report outlines how we work with prisons, probation, children and adult services, the voluntary sector, and – most importantly – the whole family, to maintain family ties, increase family stability and improve outcomes for children.

Lynda Wilson
Director, Barnardo's Northern Ireland

Introduction

It is estimated that there are around 160,000 children of prisoners in the UK¹ and seven per cent of children experience the imprisonment of their parent during their school years.²

Parental incarceration is linked to a variety of poor outcomes:

- children who have a parent in prison are three times more likely to engage in antisocial behaviour³ and it is reported that **65 per cent of boys with a convicted father go on to offend**⁴
- parental imprisonment is associated with negative school experiences such as **persistent truanting**,⁵ **bullying**⁶ and **failure to achieve in education**⁷
- children of prisoners are more than twice as likely to **suffer from mental health problems**⁸ and are at risk of **poor physical health outcomes**.⁹

The first in this series of briefings, *Every night you cry*, presented the experiences and opinions of 15 families affected by parental imprisonment. This briefing outlines some of the work that Barnardo's is doing to improve outcomes for children and families like these across the UK. Our work, while varied, consistently aims to involve the whole family in improving outcomes for the child.

Barnardo's works in partnership with prisons and other agencies from the statutory and voluntary sectors to deliver services dedicated to supporting children and families of prisoners. All service provision is grounded in an understanding that:

- maintenance of positive family ties **reduces the likelihood of prisoners reoffending** on release^{10, 11, ii}
- maintenance of positive family ties

increases the stability of a child's life both during and after parental imprisonment

- children of prisoners are children in need, and provision of support to this group will **help them to achieve the five Every Child Matters outcomes**.

What does the statutory sector provide?

Across the UK, unless a child of a prisoner is known to children's services or presents as a 'child in need' for a different reason, they come very low down the list of priorities and are unlikely to be offered any targeted support. A Barnardo's audit carried out in August 2009 showed that of 208 local authorities and health boards across the UK, only 20 make any reference to this group in their children's plan.^{12, iii}

Barnardo's practitioners in each of the four nations report that any funding they secure to support children of prisoners is usually short-term, and any progress that has been made has mainly been driven by the voluntary sector. Many prisons, in partnership with Barnardo's and other charities have invested in more child-friendly facilities, better visiting centres and family visits, but there is no consistency across the secure estate.¹³

In England, the main focus for attention on children with a parent in prison has come through the Children and Families Pathway – one of seven work streams established by the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) to reduce reoffending. However, there is currently no specific funding to support initiatives or consistency in how partnership arrangements between statutory and voluntary agencies work across the different regions and nations.

i Barnardo's works with children whose parents are in various stages of the criminal justice system, including those with community and prison sentences. This paper focuses specifically on Barnardo's work supporting families with children with a parent in prison. However, we recognise that many of the adverse outcomes associated with these two groups are the same and our work in both prisons and communities reflects this.

ii They are also more likely to have accommodation organised on release and have a better chance of finding, and keeping, a job or place in education or training.

iii In 14 cases our audit relied on 2005-08 plans because these were the most recent available.

Families do matter, an initiative originally funded by the Home Office and HM Treasury under its Invest To Save Budget – has expanded its remit to three new areas following a pilot project in the West Midlands. It is now funded by NOMS and the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to forge partnerships between children and family service providers, probation and prison services. However, the funding for this work is only secured until the end of March 2010.

Government guidance for children's centres¹⁴ recognises children of prisoners as a vulnerable group and guidance for children and young people's plans identifies children of prisoners as a group requiring additional support.¹⁵ However, there is no specific guidance about the level or type of support required, and no earmarked funding is available.

In Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government is supporting the delivery of the NOMS strategy and its associated initiatives to reduce reoffending in Wales, but lack of funding remains a barrier. Children affected by parental imprisonment are also included as 'Children and Young People in Special Circumstances' under Chapter 6 of the *National service framework for children, young people and maternity services* (2006), though evidence from self-assessment data suggests that implementation is weak.¹⁶

Service provision in Northern Ireland and Scotland is better developed than in England and Wales, but there is still more to be done.

In Scotland, the Scottish Prison Service (SPS), on behalf of the Scottish Government, has recently published a new standard in relation to children and families of prisoners in Scotland.¹⁷ It is currently being rolled out with local authority support to all prison establishments in Scotland, to improve the quality and consistency of policy and practice.

The standard will include action to establish multi-disciplinary children and families groups in every prison that will focus on improving the visiting experience for children visiting prisons and developing and implementing child protection policies and procedures in order to keep children safe during visits and contact with prisons. It will develop a more positive visiting experience through improving the appearance and facilities in visiting areas, provision for play and nursing mothers, information and support services and the training of staff. The timing and structure of visits between prisoners and their children will also be improved, particularly preventing enhanced family visits from being withdrawn as punishment. Any material changes in the delivery of services to children and families will also now be risk assessed using a children's rights impact assessment tool.

In Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Prison Service has recently published a *Draft family strategy* (2009) for consultation, which would ensure development of the Family Support Officer role^{iv} and family-centred visits at all three Northern Ireland prisons.¹⁸

iv Family Support Officers (FSOs) in each establishment are responsible for liaising between prisoner, families and external agencies to support the Family Strategy and the Resettlement Strategy. The FSO supports the family from pre-court appearance throughout the custodial period.

Barnardo's work with children and families of prisoners

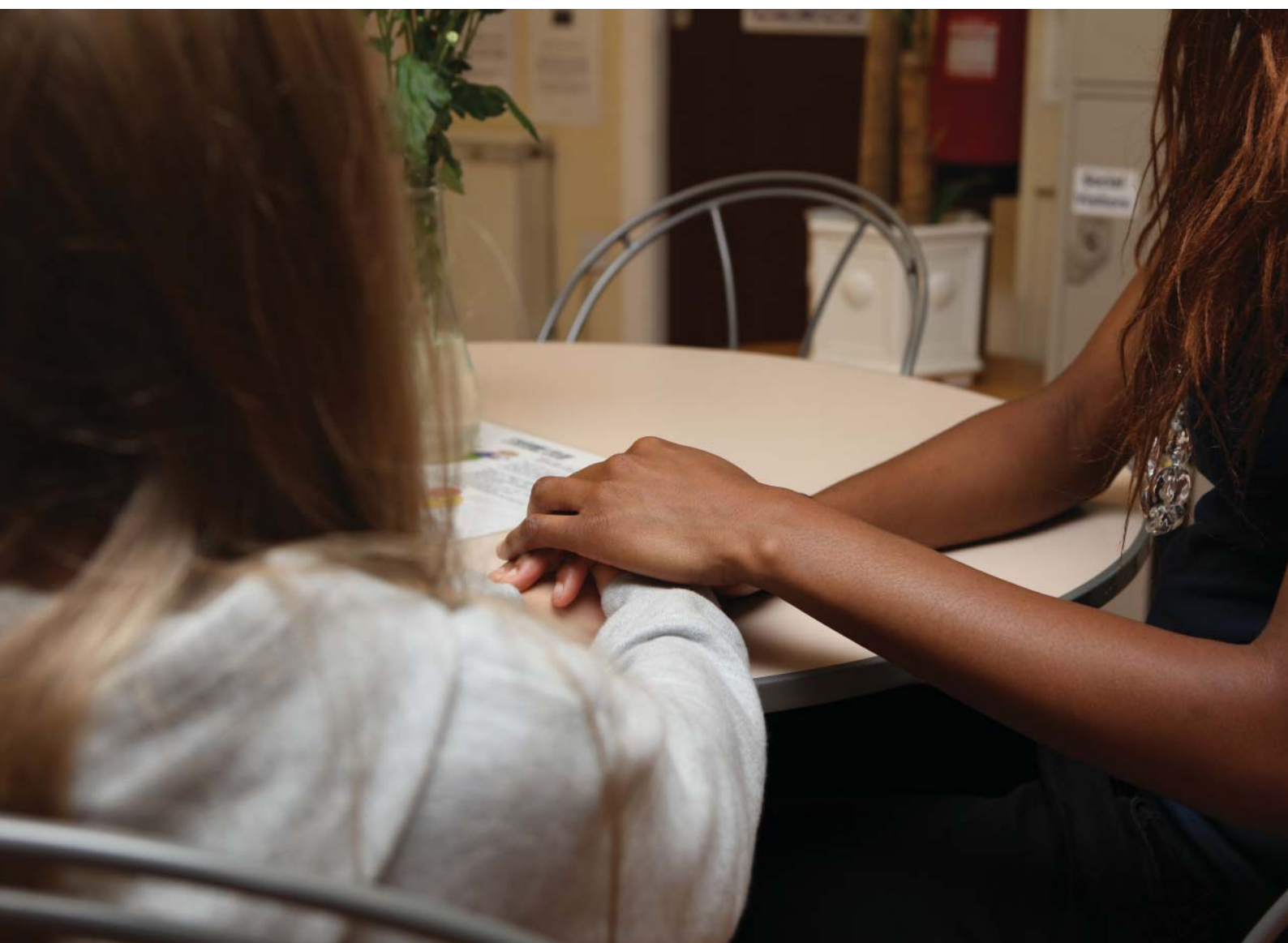
Barnardo's supports children and families affected by parental imprisonment through 21 services across all four UK nations. Our experience convinces us that providing **support to the whole family** is the best way of protecting and promoting positive outcomes for children.

We also believe that **early intervention** with families costs less than the likely spend on services to repair the damage made to families should problems be left to escalate.

Prisons can be challenging environments for family-centred work. The awareness of individual governors of the importance of family ties can either limit or enhance

the scope of services that projects are able to offer, and the availability of funding. The prison regime and security priorities also present a barrier to creating a relaxed space in which families can bond and discuss issues freely. Working as an independent organisation in partnership with prisons, police, probation and local authorities, Barnardo's is well placed to gain the trust of prisoners and families in order to pursue family-centred work that responds to local need.

In this report we focus on four Barnardo's services that are working in a variety of ways to improve outcomes for children with a parent in prison.



Northern Ireland Parenting Matters

Building family ties by influencing policy, training staff and working direct with families

Barnardo's Parenting Matters in Northern Ireland has been using **evidence-based practice** to support parents in prison and their families since 1996. The service is funded by the Northern Ireland Prison Service, to work in all three prisons in Northern Ireland, delivering training sessions to parents in prison and their partners, one-to-one support, family days, information and signposting. Parenting Matters also works with various statutory and voluntary sector partners to influence policy and develop family-friendly services.

The service aims to achieve three distinct outcomes, that:

- **family relationships are maintained** and/or strengthened when a parent is in prison
- **awareness is raised** among key stakeholders regarding the importance of parent/child relationships during a period of imprisonment
- **family stability and continuity of parenting is maintained** and/or strengthened post-release.

Training

The service delivers eight group courses to provide support and advice to parents throughout the full cycle of their imprisonment. The programmes are tailored to respond to the specific needs of different groups, for example Staying In Touch helps parents to explain their imprisonment to their child, Preparing For Release helps fathers prepare for family life, and Partners Together is a session that enables couples to learn how they can parent as a team. Service users then have the opportunity to celebrate their achievements at a family event facilitated by Barnardo's at the end of each course. Parent Facilitator Training is available for prison officers

on a voluntary basis to enable them to co-facilitate the parenting programmes. The training is funded by the prison and accredited with an OCN level 3 qualification.^v The course takes place in the community and is attended by staff from a variety of agencies, including children's centres and social services, therefore improving the awareness of prison officers to other issues that families may be facing.

One-to-one support

One-to-one support is offered to help prisoners work through individual concerns relating to their family, including child safety, access arrangements, and information about parenting programmes and family days. Barnardo's offers practical advice as well as signposting to other partner services such as addiction recovery support.

Family-friendly visiting facilities

In Hydebank Wood (a women's prison) Barnardo's has been involved in the planning of a new extended visiting centre. This new development will allow mothers to spend four to six hours with their children on special occasions such as birthdays, in a welcoming environment with facilities for cooking meals and playing. A Barnardo's worker will be available for one-to-one support to prepare the family for the visit and to debrief afterwards.

Resources and publications

Parenting Matters has developed a number of resources for prisoners and their families, including: *It's a tough time for everyone* – a booklet and DVD that helps children come to terms with

^v OCN is the Open College Network. A level 3 qualification is comparable to NVQ level 3, A-level, AS-level and AVCE. More information can be found at: www.ocnni.org.uk/content.asp?id=5



their parent's imprisonment; and *Family ties – Information for families when a mum is in prison*. Both have won SCOPE communication awards for excellence.^{vi}

Measuring outcomes

In 2008-09, 185 parents enrolled on Parenting Matters courses in prisons – with 341 children between them. One hundred and sixty-one parents were supported through one-to-one work. Ninety per cent of parents completed the courses they were enrolled on. Common reasons for non-completion were early release or transfer to another prison.

Parenting Matters aims to ensure that **family relationships are maintained, awareness is raised amongst those working with prisoners and their families and family stability is maintained.**

- An evaluation in 2008 found that after completing the Being A Dad

programme, over three-quarters of parents who had contact with their children said that they were making more of an effort to **maintain their relationship** while in prison.

- In the Preparing For Release programme, 95 per cent of participants reported that they felt **more confident about settling back into family life** after doing the course, and 98 per cent had more realistic expectations about returning home.
- Eleven prison officers have taken part in Parent Facilitator training, and in 2008 Parenting Matters received its second **National Training Award for its partnership working** with the Northern Ireland Prison Service on this work.^{vii}

For more information on Northern Ireland Parenting Matters please visit: www.barnardos.org.uk/parentingmatters Or contact the service: niparenting.matters@barnardos.org.uk

^{vi} The SCOPE award is organised by the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action to recognise excellent standards in all forms of communication in the community and voluntary sectors.

^{vii} The National Training Awards are organised by the Department for Education and Learning in Northern Ireland to recognise excellence in training.

Liverpool Parenting in Prisons Project

Following the success of Parenting Matters in Northern Ireland, the model has been adapted to meet the needs of offenders and their families in prisons in Liverpool.

At HMP Kennet, Barnardo's are co-located with workers from Job Centre Plus, Nacro and Citizen's Advice Bureau which facilitates referrals and information sharing.

Following an initial screening, all fathers entering prison are assessed by Barnardo's and offered one-to-one support and access to parenting programmes. An assessment is undertaken to offer support to their family in the community if required.

The service also works with the prison to deliver family learning days, to provide support to offenders at pathway meetings and to raise awareness of the issues faced by families of offenders amongst staff.

'It was an eye opener, as I had never thought about what my kids say when other kids talk about their dads.'

'I feel that there is a lot more I can do while in here for my family, and be in contact with them a lot more.'

'It showed me how to still have a relationship with my children.'

(Comments from fathers after completing a parenting course)

For further information on Liverpool Parenting in Prisons Project, please contact Service Manager Rachel Harding: Rachel.harding@barnardos.org.uk Or Team Leader, Karen Lankstead: Karen.lankstead@barnardos.org.uk

Mr Cole's story

'Mr Cole' self-referred to Liverpool Parenting Matters. He was worried about his partner who was heavily pregnant, and her three other children. Two of the younger children had poor school attendance and the eldest was at risk of exclusion and associated with a negative peer group who were involved in criminal activity.

Following Mr Cole's conviction, the family had been forced to move to a different community to avoid verbal abuse and threats. The children's school was now two bus journeys away and the family's housing benefit was no longer enough to pay for the new house.

Barnardo's was successful in supporting the family to find a local school and gain places for the children through appeal.

Barnardo's also arranged for the eldest child to be transferred to a specialist school where a full assessment of need was carried out.

Mr Cole's partner was supported in applying for discretionary housing benefit until she could find somewhere more affordable. The family were also referred to a local community project who now support them in ongoing school meetings, and provide family activities, as well as an after school club that has helped the eldest child disassociate from his negative peer group.

Barnardo's continues to work with Mr Cole in prison, keeping him informed of his family's progress. He has taken part in Barnardo's Family Ties programme, looking at the positive things he can do whilst in custody to maintain relationships and support his family.



ECHO (Empowering Children of Offenders)

Barnardo's support to children and families of offenders within the community

In the South West of England, Barnardo's has utilised experience of engaging and supporting families within prisons, to develop new services that identify, assess and support children and families of offenders within the community.

ECHO Bristol and ECHO Devon work in partnership with NOMS to achieve improvements for every child and family on one or more of five key outcomes:

- satisfactory school attendance
- enhanced parent-child relationships
- increased parent-child contacts
- access to information on housing, health, benefits, rights or support needs
- children's views and opinions voiced and acted upon.

The outcomes contribute to an overall ECHO service aim of 'engaging children of offenders to **reduce the isolation, financial hardship and stigma** attached to having a parent in prison and to

increase their social, emotional and mental wellbeing'.

The **ECHO model of practice** is based on Barnardo's 13 years of experience working to support children and families of prisoners across the UK; evidence of the poor outcomes of children of offenders; and recent research giving a voice to children and families of prisoners in Bristol (Barnardo's 2009)¹⁹ which highlighted a need for local services. The model is uniquely designed to engage a group that is traditionally difficult to reach:

- A focus on developing strong working relationships across each local authority ensures that **referrals** come from a variety of sources including social services, health, housing support, employment and training support, police, probation, prisons, youth offending teams, children's

centres, youth clubs and a local NOMS project, Eden House, which houses females being resettled in Bristol following imprisonment.

- A **reference group** involving children, young people and families, as well as representatives from the referral partners, informs the direction of the projects as they develop. The services also utilise the enthusiasm and skills of a number of volunteers.
- **Interventions** with families are varied and include signposting to debt, housing and employment advice, one-to-one work to identify underlying reasons for poor behaviour or school attendance, one-to-one parenting work inside and outside of prison, accessing funds to enable increased contact with an incarcerated parent and advice on ensuring successful prison visits.
- The ECHO model places substantial **emphasis on education in improving outcomes**. The two services work closely with schools to raise awareness and to implement mechanisms that

allow information sharing between teachers, children and families. This expertise is also being compiled into a resource pack that will be available to schools across the region.

- A second **toolkit containing resources for children's centres** will combine Barnardo's expertise of working in children's centres, working with very young children, and working with children and families of offenders.

Moving forward into 2010, ECHO Bristol and ECHO Devon will continue to refine and develop the model of practice. A full evaluation will provide information about the effectiveness of supporting children and families of offenders from within the community.

*For more information about ECHO, please contact Service Managers Jendayi Serwah (Bristol) or Claire English (Devon):
Jendayi.serwah@barnardos.org.uk
Claire.english@barnardos.org.uk*

Barnardo's Scotland

Barnardo's Scotland has a highly successful programme with South Ayrshire Council Criminal Justice service which works with women offenders to reduce reoffending and prevent breaching of community orders.

At the outset of the project, 37 per cent of women offenders in South Ayrshire breached their community orders. This breach rate was reduced by 60 per cent following the introduction of Barnardo's support. This reduction in the rate of women breaching

their orders has been sustained in subsequent years.

Barnardo's Scotland is currently in negotiation with the Scottish Prison Service with a view to developing various models of front line service provision within secure establishments to provide support to children/young people with a parent/guardian in prison.

*For further information on Barnardo's work supporting children and families of prisoners in Scotland, please contact Development Officer Alison Ritchie:
Alison.ritchie@barnardos.org.uk*

HMP Dorchester Family Support Service

Barnardo's working in partnership with the prison, children and families to develop enhanced visiting facilities

Since April 2008 the Family Support Service in HMP Dorchester has been making practical and cultural changes within the prison to help maintain and improve the relationships of prisoners and their children. Originally funded by Barnardo's, the prison now invests 50 per cent of the costs of this work, which has ensured a full programme of work in 2009.

Barnardo's aim within the prison is to promote parent-child interaction. The service carried out a 10 week consultation with prisoners, their families, children and prison staff to determine what needed to be changed in order to improve the experience of prison visits and procedures for families.^{viii} The consultation helped to inform a project and outputs so far have included:

Visiting facilities

The visiting centre is a space where visitors can wait outside the prison, before visiting time begins. Barnardo's aim was to ensure that families' experience of prison visits are less stressful, more enjoyable for children and less intimidating – thereby encouraging more frequent visits and increasing parent-child interaction. The visiting centre has been refurbished to include a well-equipped play corner, improved child-friendly facilities such as baby changing and comfortable seating and tables. A new welcoming sign (designed by the families) encourages visiting families into the centre.

Information for families

Barnardo's improved and updated the information displayed in the visiting centre so that families feel better prepared and more likely to enjoy

visits. A Barnardo's worker based at the visiting centre during its use also provides information about services in the community where appropriate. Barnardo's has recently secured funding from the Dorset Community Cashback Fund to develop an information and advice surgery adjoining the visitor centre. This will allow partner agencies to hold drop-in sessions on issues such as debt, housing, domestic violence and employment/training.

Visiting procedures

The service has influenced a change in visiting procedures. Previously, visitors waited a long time for visits, taking part in a ticketing process and security checks that reduced their visiting time. Now, security checks take place before the visit starts, there is less waiting around and no visiting time is lost. These are valuable changes for families making long trips with children. The visiting process is under constant review by Barnardo's in consultation with prisoners' families.

Awareness raising

Staff in prisons have reported that family contact time can disrupt the prison routine, where the primary function is to maintain security. Barnardo's provides information to prison employees about the role of families in reducing reoffending through use of a presentation played on screens in staff areas. Since this work started, it has been reported that prison staff better understand and prioritise the needs of families, for example by making sure the visiting centre is opened on time so that families have somewhere to wait before visits.

^{viii} The consultation included interviews with 60 prisoners and 150 families of prisoners. Visiting children were also consulted.

Children's visit days

Barnardo's facilitates monthly children's visit days and quarterly family activity days where dads can engage in play with children in a more relaxed environment. This work contributes to increasing parent-child interaction – thus helping to buffer the effects of parental imprisonment on the child, and contributing to maintaining strong relations for when resettlement occurs.

Sustainability

Barnardo's is in the process of establishing a Friends of HMP Dorchester charitable trust that will foster relationships with local businesses and stakeholders and support continuation of the work to maintain family relationships.

For more information on HMP Dorchester Family Support Service please contact the Service Manager, Nicki Smith: Nicola.smith@barnardos.org.uk

'It was nice for them to see their dad and play some games. It certainly helped to maintain a bond with each other.'



Barnardo's Cymru Neath Port Talbot Partnership

Barnardo's delivering targeted parenting programmes within the prisons

Barnardo's Cymru Neath Port Talbot Partnership delivers prison-funded accredited parenting programmes to fathers in HMP Swansea and Parc Prison. The programme aims to improve fathers' awareness of the impact that their imprisonment has on their partners and children, increase their parenting skills and confidence, and help them make better use of contact time to develop their relationship with their children. The work was adapted from successful Barnardo's parenting programmes, which have been running in the Neath and Port Talbot community since 2001, and includes elements specific to prisoners that are adapted from Barnardo's work in prisons in Northern Ireland.

Prisoners self refer or are recommended to the programme by prison officers. The course is interactive and requires minimal reading and writing so that prisoners with learning difficulties are not excluded. A short film with two young girls talking about the experience of visiting their father in prison has proven particularly effective at prompting prisoners to consider the effects of their imprisonment on their family. Other methods of delivery include role play, discussion and flip charts. Topics covered include: reflections on the father's own experiences of positive and negative parenting; types of behaviour and different responses; boundaries and rules; and communication and negotiation.

At the end of the course an extended visit is arranged so that the prisoners can spend more time with their families, practise their new skills, and be presented with certificates for OCN level 1 parenting.^{ix} One parent who has

'graduated' from the programme at HMP Swansea has also been back to volunteer as a mentor on subsequent courses.

On release, parents who are resident in the Neath and Port Talbot areas are offered additional one-to-one family support and further parenting programmes in the community.

Measuring outcomes

Since 2006, Barnardo's has delivered five parenting programmes in Welsh prisons, to 50 participants. An evaluation of the parenting programme in Parc Prison using the Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI-2)^x found that all parents had reduced their level of risk of abuse or neglect, with the average scores in two areas of parenting moving from mid- or high-level risk to the lowest risk category.

Focus group research revealed that fathers felt they had learnt to understand and respond to their children's needs and feelings better and to handle their children's behaviour. The course was particularly important for those fathers whose children had been taken into local authority care as it has allowed them to evidence their commitment to being a parent and highlight their improved parenting skills. All of the participants questioned were keen to take another parenting programme to refresh and learn further skills before release.

'The course was very helpful for me as I can now understand my children better and be a better father to my sons.'

(Father on a parenting programme at Parc Prison)

^{ix} Barnardo's Cymru Positive Parenting Programmes have Open College Network accreditation. Level one is roughly equivalent to NVQ level 1, or GCSEs grade D-G.

^x The AAPI-2 is an inventory designed to assess the risk of parenting behaviours associated with child abuse and neglect. It uses five subscales to measure inappropriate expectations, lack of empathy, physical punishment, role reversal and power and independence. Responses are converted to sten scores that compare the participant's responses to a normal distribution. More information can be found at: <http://www.aapionline.com/index.php?page=research>

Cost benefits

On average it costs £600 to support a father in prison through a 10 week Barnardo's parenting course.^{xi} It is known that many fathers participate as one step towards regaining custody of children on care orders. It costs approximately £489 **per week** to keep a child in foster care.²⁰ Barnardo's believes that by supporting parents to improve their parenting skills where possible, not only do we improve the outcomes for their children, but the significant costs of foster care could be avoided.

'I benefited a great deal, as now I have a lot more understanding

with regards to why my children might behave in certain ways. I now feel I'd approach behaviours more differently.'

'I found it emotional as I didn't realise how hard it is for our kids to visit us in prison, but found it useful.'

(Comments from fathers on parenting programme in HMP Swansea)

For more information on Cymru Neath Port Talbot Partnership's prison work please contact the Service Manager, Rhian Evans:

Rhian.evans@barnardos.org.uk

Simon's story

When Simon went in to prison three years ago he says he was addicted to drugs, bad tempered and violent. His pregnant partner was referred to a mother and baby unit due to her drug dependency. Simon's son is now two and a half, and since he has been in prison his son has been made subject to a care order and is currently being cared for by Simon's parents. Simon self referred to Barnardo's because he wanted to become a better parent and do everything possible to prove to social services that he was fit to look after his son on release.

Simon attended the Barnardo's parenting programme in HMP Swansea. He says that this was the first time he had ever spoken about how it felt to be a dad. He gained confidence throughout the course and found it 'eye-opening' and 'practical'.

'I thought having a baby was just about changing its nappy and feeding it... I was shocked how much it takes to be a father.'

Simon was able to try out the skills he was learning on the programme during visits and phone calls with his son, for example with the use of eye contact, and responding to difficult situations.

Simon has been living back in the community for four weeks. He feels he has developed new skills to deal with parenting challenges without resorting to drugs or violence. He has regular supervised contact with his son where he continues to enjoy being a dad – he is proud of how his son is learning from him and they are developing a good relationship.

Simon continues to visit his son and talk to him whenever he can. He has recently approached Barnardo's about taking part in a further parenting programme with his partner so that they can both strengthen their skills. He is realistic in his aspirations for the future and realises he needs to take things one step at a time, but he hopes that he and his partner will soon be able to regain custody of their son. Simon feels he now has a good reason to stay out of trouble and start afresh.

^{xi} It costs £6,000 to run one parenting programme in prison. To date five programmes have been run, with a total of 50 fathers taking places on the programme. £6,000 / (50/5) = £600

Conclusion

Barnardo's has been working in prisons and the community with the children and families of offenders for over 10 years. This report has provided a snapshot of the variety of work we do, and our success in improving outcomes for the children and families of prisoners. Our model of practice, while varied and adapted to meet local need, incorporates key elements that enable us to see change:

1 Research shows that parental experience and involvement can have a profound and lasting effect on a child's development, so we use a **whole family approach** where it is beneficial to the child – working with prisoners and the family 'on the outside' to find solutions.

2 Children of prisoners remain a largely invisible group and an important aspect of our role as a voluntary sector organisation is to **put the needs of the children and families of prisoners firmly on the agenda of both children's services and criminal justice services**. We

do this through strategic work with our partners in prisons, probation, children and adult services and other voluntary sector organisations.

3 We constantly **work in partnership** with other agencies and organisations – sharing information and resources, drawing on varied expertise and signposting and referring families to other agencies where their needs can be supported.

4 We **draw on the wide ranging expertise of the Barnardo's family of services** in developing our work. For example, services in Wales adapted a parenting programme from our prison work in Northern Ireland and combined it with expertise from family support services in the community.

5 We continue to refine and develop our services based on the evidence of what works. **Evaluation and measurement of outcomes** is a new and important feature of our work, and an area in which we will continue to build expertise.

Acknowledgements

This is the second briefing in this series. The first briefing *Every night you cry* – details the experiences of parental imprisonment for the children and partners of 15 male prisoners in Bristol, England. It is available at www.barnardos.org.uk.

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Supporting prisoners' families

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Some images posed by models.
Names have been changed to protect identities.