

OTHER RESOURCES & USEFUL ORGANISATIONS

Action for Prisoners' Families:-

- Finding Dad by Daniel Lee
 - Danny's Mum by Lesley Saddington
 - Tommy's Dad by Emma Randle-Caprez
 - The Outsiders - series of booklets
 - Homeward Bound - resource pack with DVD
- Tel: 0208 8123600
www.prisonersfamilies.org.uk

Kids Visiting Prison - KIDS VIP

DVD and Booklet
Tel: 0207 5822679 annettabennett@aol.com

Assisted Prison Visits Unit

Prisoners' close relatives/ partner/ friend may be entitled to help with travel expenses.
Tel: 0845 300 1423
www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk

Prisoners' Families and Friends Service

Tel: 0808 808 3444
Freepost Prisoners' Families
www.prisonersfamiliesandfriends.org.uk

Prisoners' Families Helpline

Tel: 0808 808 2003 (free phone)

Ormiston Children & Family Trust

My Mum's in Prison
My Dad's in Prison
Visiting my Mum
Visiting my Dad
Tel: 01473 724517
www.ormiston.org



Islington Council

A guide for grandparents bringing up the children of prisoners.
Tel: 0207 527 2000 www.islington.gov.uk

Nacro Publications

Outside Help - Practical information for the families of people in prison.
Tel: 0207 8406427 www.nacro.org.uk

Citizens Advice Bureau

www.citizensadvice.org.uk



Family Matters

The Thames Valley Partnership

Townhill Barn

Dorton Road

Chilton, Aylesbury

Buckinghamshire. HP18 9NA

Tel: 01844 202001

Fax: 01844 202008

Email: admin@thamesvalleypartnership.org.uk

www.thamesvalleypartnership.org.uk

Family Matters

INVISIBLE CHILDREN

A Teachers' Guide to working with children and young people whose parent/siblings are in Prison



INTRODUCTION

When a child's or young person's parent or sibling is sent to prison, that child's life is turned upside down...

The children of prisoners however, can be largely invisible both inside and outside schools.

Schools often only find out a child/young person has lost a parent or sibling to custody through the local paper, from other parents or through general gossip. They may find out through the child or carer, or from investigating sudden unexplained absences. There is currently no requirement on any agency/person to let the school know that they are caring for the child of a prisoner.

When a teacher becomes aware, it is often difficult to know what, if anything, to do and how to support the child. The following pages are a starting point aimed at helping the child, teacher and parent/carer.

SOME KEY FACTS

160,000 children every year are affected by the imprisonment of a relative (Home Office 2007).

30% of children of prisoners suffer significant mental health problems compared to 10% in the general population.

Boys are twice as likely to become convicted offenders if their father had a criminal conviction.

THE INVISIBLE CHILDREN

Families often experience complex feelings around the loss of a parent or sibling to prison:

EXTREME ANGER- How could they have done this?

BEREAVEMENT- If loved, then a feeling of extreme loss and separation

LIES- Covering up- "Don't tell school and friends"

RELIEF- If there has been domestic violence

INSECURITY- Loss of income, debt, possibly losing the family home

EMOTIONAL TURMOIL- Mood swings from the remaining parent and siblings

CHILD CARE- Parenting no longer shared-responsibility left with parent/carer at home and possibly siblings taking on parental role

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL- May impact significantly on the state of the household-financially and on the family's ability to cope

EFFECTS ON THE CHILD

The impact on the child can be devastating. The child may experience feelings of loss, shame, isolation, lower self-esteem or anxiety, anger and frustration. They may particularly fear that other family members may be taken away too. The child may also be struggling with feelings of guilt and relief if their relationship with the parent/sibling was difficult to begin with. There may be major life changes to the child as a consequence of a parent's imprisonment such as moving house or having to care for other children in the family.

BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEMS

The child may manifest problems in the form of hostility towards figures of authority, aggressive behaviour, withdrawal, refusal to go to school, bed wetting, nightmares, temper tantrums, lack of concentration, moodiness and failing school performance - bully or being bullied.

The child may exhibit more acute problems at certain times, depending on what is happening to the parent, such as at the time of arrest, court appearances, prison visits and release.

HOW SHOULD THE TEACHER RESPOND?

- Provide privacy to talk
- Listen carefully and allow them to "tell their story"
- Acknowledge what is said
- Reassure them that you believe them
- Agree actions with the child
- Do not undervalue the trauma of their experiences
- Acknowledge the child's right to confidentiality
- Where appropriate seek advice from the LA support services
- Take account of child protection issues and work with relevant services
- Don't ask about the crime

WHAT DO CHILDREN OF PRISONERS WANT FROM TEACHERS?

- Children say they may want support from teachers
- To talk in confidence
- To respect their privacy if they don't want to talk about it
- To be there for them
- To help protect them from gossip, teasing and bullying when they ask for help

TEACHING OPPORTUNITIES

PHSE or RE classes can become a forum to raise sensitive issues around crime and the consequences of crime on family and victims. Activities such as circle time can provide opportunities. It may be helpful to bring in outside speakers to make a presentation to the class. Listening schemes, mentor schemes and peer group support can be useful. Contact numbers of external organisations and support groups can be made available to pupils.

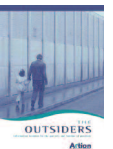
Art and drama may also provide opportunities to explore the issues. A small group of behaviour support teachers in Banbury are developing a range of resources specifically for teachers to use when working with a child who has a parent/sibling in custody.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Action for Prisoners' Families promotes the just treatment of prisoners' families by the prison system and society. It offers a wide variety of information.

THE OUTSIDERS

A series of five booklets for partners and families of prisoners. These guides discuss the issues families are likely to face and provide practical information on how to cope when a relative or friend is in prison.



Booklets are FREE to families and friends of prisoners. To order a copy email info@actionpf.org.uk