

i-HOP: Assisting prisons to support children of offenders



‘Visiting prison is scary but I want to see my dad’

39%
Prisoners who receive visits from their families are 39% less likely to reoffend.

Find out how to support offenders’ children and their families’

www.i-hop.org.uk

Ring our professionals’ helpline **FREE** on **0808 802 2013**

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 **Barnardo's**

In Partnership with
 **POPS**
Providing Support to Families of Offenders

Funded by

Department for Education

Who are we?

i-HOP is a new service for professionals who support offenders' families with children, which collates and promotes examples of services, interventions, resources, policy and research around this vulnerable group.

Barnardo's in partnership with POPS have been commissioned by the **Department for Education** to deliver this service as an online information hub with a focus England (www.i-hop.org.uk). The service will be targeted at professionals who work with offenders' children and their families from numerous spheres, including education, health and social care as well as the criminal justice system.

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

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“We was there when he got locked up”

7 year old girl

It is estimated that there are **200,000 children a year** that experience the imprisonment of a parent. Research increasingly shows the impact that parental imprisonment can have on these children – **poorer outcomes, stigma, isolation, health and financial difficulties**. Currently there is no routine identification of who these children are and therefore no way of ensuring their needs are met.

Children of offenders and prisons

“When we get to see him we get to huggle him... We have to wait and then he comes out. He has to sit on the red seat. He’s not allowed to get up.”

7 year old girl

Maintaining family ties whilst a prisoner serves a sentence is important both for children and families and the prisoner:

- **Re-offending:** The Ministry of Justice reported that those prisoners who had visits from their families in custody are 39% less likely to re-offend than those who do not receive family visits. This study also reported that family support improves a prisoner’s employment chances and reduces homelessness after release.¹
- **Inter-generational offending:** 65% of boys with a father in prison go on to offend.² The children of prisoners face specific challenges and have varying needs – it is important for this to be recognised in order to improve outcomes.

“It would have been nice if the staff could have taken a picture of him with his baby.” Mother

Prisons are well placed to offer support, advice and information to parents serving custodial sentences, about the practicalities and importance of maintaining family ties. Parenting programmes offered in prisons are usually popular and well received, and as well as developing essential parenting skills and parents’ bonds with their children, have also been known to contribute to prisoner stability.³ Family days provide the appropriate environment and time for significant parent-child interaction. Findings from COPING, a recent large-scale European study looking at the vulnerabilities and resilience of children of prisoners, recommended that parents should be encouraged to fulfil their role as parent far as possible whilst in prison.⁴



How can i-HOP support prisons?

“When we leave, we cry a bit.” 11 year old boy

Children and families has long featured in prison work, as a reducing re-offending pathway. Recently the importance of families was recognised in NOMS’ 2014 Commissioning intentions, with an emphasis on prisons working with local authorities to support offenders’ families.⁵ Furthermore children and families have been highlighted in the Transforming Rehabilitation evidence around reducing re-offending, with a focus on family visits and home leave.⁶

In this context of recognising the importance of offenders’ families, prisons have a clear role to play.

“I’ve took them to [the prison] every time because I think it’s lovely there, plus those child-centred visits – they’re brilliant.” Mother

i-HOP is a national one stop information and advice service and free helpline for all professionals working with children and families of offenders. It brings together information that can **assist prison staff** to support offenders and their children and families with maintaining relationships:

- **resources** for offenders about maintaining family ties whilst in prison
- **guidelines and toolkits** for developing whole-prison practice and effective family days
- details of **programmes for offenders** that can be delivered in prisons
- **resources and services** for families of offenders
- details of local multi-agency **training for frontline staff** regarding the impact of imprisonment on families

- **examples of existing practice** in prisons that promote family relationships
- **research, evidence based practice, and evaluations** to inform the development or commissioning of children and families work

i-HOP recognises that prison staff work in a busy environment with multiple demands on their time. i-HOP puts all the resources in one place, so help and information is there when it's needed, either over the phone or on the internet.

Examples of existing practice

HMP Wolds Family Learning Programme includes a weekly visit in a relaxed environment for fathers and their children, allowing them to bond and interact, in their capacity as parents. Both the parent in prison and the parent outside learn about parenting skills, and complete tasks to receive an OCN certificate.⁷

Action for Prisoners' Families have produced a detailed factsheet for prisoners, **Parenting from Prison**. This explains the importance of keeping in touch with children and family, highlighting some of the difficulties that arise for both the prisoner and their family. The sheet details suggestions to make this process easier, as well as giving practical information. It is specifically aimed at prisoners serving long sentences. The factsheet can be downloaded for free and given to prisoners.

Please contact us directly if you would like i-HOP to support you in developing your prison's practice: polly.wright@barnardos.org.uk

Note:

Children's and parents' quotes are taken from interviews with children and families in a Barnardo's report: Owen Gill, *Every night you cry: Case studies of 15 Bristol families with a father in prison*, Barnardo's, 2009

References:

- 1 May, C., Sharma, N. and Stewart, D., *Factors linked to reoffending: a one-year follow-up of prisoners who took part in the Resettlement Surveys 2001, 2003 and 2004*, Ministry of Justice, London, 2008
- 2 Joseph Murray, David P. Farrington, Ivana Sekol, Rikke F. Olsen, *Effects of parental imprisonment on child antisocial behaviour and mental health: a systematic review*, Campbell Systematic Reviews 2009:4, 2009
- 3 Boswell G, Poland F and Price A, *Prison based family support: An evaluation of the effectiveness of the Family Support Worker role piloted in four English prisons during 2009-10*, Ministry of Justice, August 2008
- 4 Jones A D and Wainaina-Woźna A E (Eds.), *COPING: Children of Prisoners, Interventions & Mitigations to Strengthen Mental Health*, University of Huddersfield, 2013
- 5 National Offender Management Service, *NOMS Commissioning Intentions From 2014*, London, 2013
- 6 Hunter G, Skrine O, Turnbull P, Kazimirski A, Pritchard D, *Intermediate outcomes of family and intimate relationship interventions: a rapid evidence assessment*, Institute for Criminal Policy Research and New Philanthropy Capital, National Offender Management Service, 2013
- 7 Ofsted, *Good practice resource – Inclusive family learning in a prison setting: HMP Wolds*, April 2011

Visit i-HOP



Visit **www.i-hop.org.uk** to find out more and discover resources to support prison staff in this area of work. Sign up to become a member to receive free monthly i-HOP e-news and view case studies.

Pick up the phone



If you are working in a prison and require information about supporting prisoners with family ties, or children and families of offenders, contact our helpline on: **0808 802 2013** (Monday to Fridays, 9am – 5pm).

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