

NICCO: Assisting Criminal Justice System commissioners to consider children and families of offenders



‘The cost of reoffending is estimated to be £9.5 to £13 billion each year’

40%

of prisoners stated that support from their family would help them stop reoffending in the future.

Find out how to support offenders’ children and their families

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www.nicco.org.uk

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Barnardo's Registered Charity
Nos. 216250 and SC037605

Funded by



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Who are we?

NICCO is a service that supports professionals to work effectively with offenders' children and families. NICCO collates and promote examples of services, interventions, resources, policy and research around this vulnerable group.

Barnardo's was commissioned by the **Department for Education** to develop this service as an online information hub with a focus on England (www.nicco.org.uk). The service is targeted at any professionals who come into contact with offenders' children and their families, from various sectors including education, health and social care as well as the criminal justice system.

* GOV.UK/government/policies/reducing-reoffending-and-improving-rehabilitation

** Ministry of Justice (2012) Prisoners' childhood and family backgrounds, London.

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A focus on children and families

“There is still stigma... People would think that everybody in the family [is] like that.” Mother

Children and families work has long featured in the Criminal Justice System, 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.¹ 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.²

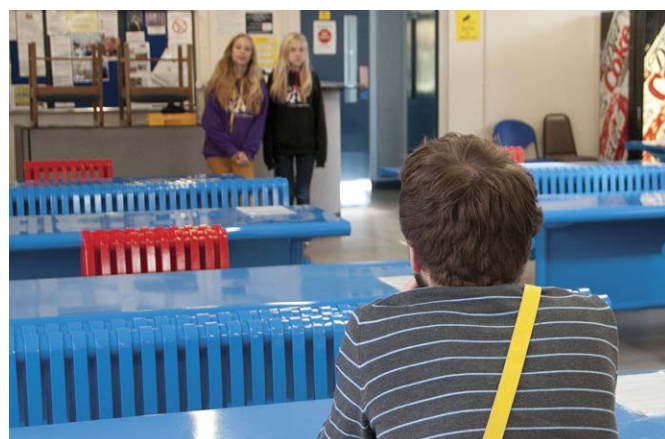
The economic case for supporting offenders in regards to children and families has also been documented. Research carried out by the New Economics Foundation into the Integrated Family Support programme run in prisons by Pact, found that the programme gave a return of £11.41 for every £1 invested.³ The high costs to the state, local government and society of offending mean family-focused outcomes have a clear social value:

- **Reducing 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.⁴
- **Reducing inter-generational offending:** Research has shown that 65% of boys whose fathers were imprisoned before they were 10, went on to offend themselves. The children of prisoners face specific challenges and have varying needs – it is important for this to be recognised at an early stage in order to improve outcomes.

Children of offenders

“We was there when he got locked up”
7 year old girl

It is estimated that there are **200,000 children** that experience the imprisonment of a parent every year in England and Wales⁵. Currently there is no routine identification of who these children are and therefore no way of ensuring their needs are met.



Research increasingly shows the impact that parental imprisonment can have on these children – **poorer outcomes, stigma, isolation, health and financial difficulties.**

Considering the needs of children and families

“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

Offenders’ family relationships and the needs of the children and families themselves should be recognised in service specifications and Key Performance Indicators with families identified as targeted service users. This would work to ensure a consideration of children and families is effectively embedded in service provision – rather than as an afterthought or ‘add-on’. Through early intervention the best outcomes are made possible for both offender and families.

Parenting programmes offered in prisons are usually popular and well received. As well as developing essential parenting skills and parents’ bonds with their children, they have also been known to contribute to prisoner stability.⁶ High quality family visit days can provide the appropriate environment and time for significant parent-child interaction. Furthermore, after release the support of families and friends can help offenders successfully reintegrate back into the community,⁷ with ‘through the gate’ and community based services in a good position to support these family ties.

Effective multi-agency working across statutory and voluntary agencies can often be a crucial factor in achieving positive outcomes for offenders and families, and ensuring effective safeguarding.

How can NICCO help?

NICCO is a national one stop information and advice service for all professionals working with children and families of offenders, funded by the Department for Education. It brings together information that can **assist commissioners** in considering children and families of offenders:

- details of **existing services and interventions** in prisons and the community that promote family relationships
- up to date **policy frameworks, government guidance and recommendations**
- **guidelines and toolkits** for developing effective children and family practice within criminal justice services
- details of **programmes for offenders** that can be delivered in prisons or the community
- **research, evidence based practice, and evaluations** to inform the development or commissioning of children and families work
- details of local multi-agency **training for staff** regarding the impact of imprisonment on families

Examples of existing services

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.⁸

Bradford's Thinking Fathers Parenting Programme

is commissioned by West Yorkshire CRC and delivered by Barnardo's. It enables fathers on community orders or supervision to develop their parenting skills and consider the impact of their offending on children.

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 National Offender Management Service, *NOMS Commissioning Intentions From 2014*, London, 2013
- 2 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
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- 4 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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- 6 Williams, K., Papadopoulou, V., and Booth, N., *Prisoners' childhood and family backgrounds: Results from the Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction (SPCR) longitudinal cohort study of prisoners*, MOJ, 2012
- 7 Social Exclusion Unit, *Reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners*, July 2002
- 8 Ofsted, *Good practice resource – Inclusive family learning in a prison setting: HMP Wolds*, April 2011

Visit NICCO

Visit www.nicco.org.uk to find out more and discover a range of information regarding offenders' family relationships and support for children and families of offenders. Sign up to become a member to receive free NICCO e-news.



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