



BELIEVE IN CHILDREN
CREDWCH MEWN PLANT

Poverty, disadvantage and the children of offenders in Wales

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Children affected by parental imprisonment and offending

- Estimates of the number of children and young people with a parent in prison in England and Wales vary between 125,000 and 150,000. Most recently the literature suggests a figure of 150,000.
- Approximately 7 per cent of the school population will experience the imprisonment of a parent during their time in school



‘Poverty and disadvantage among prisoners’ families’ , JRF, 2007

A recent JRF study suggests that criminal justice and social welfare policies combine to impoverish, disadvantage and exclude prisoners’ families and their children in particular.

- Vulnerable to financial instability, poverty, debt, housing disruption.
- Barriers to employment magnified.
- Benefit delays and rent arrears.
- The cost of supporting imprisonment.





'Hidden Harm', Inquiry of Advisory Council on Misuse of Drugs, 2003

- Estimate there are between 200,000 and 300,000 children in England and Wales where one or both parents have serious drug problems.
- This represents about 2–3% of children under 16.



Drug using offenders: 'Around Arrest, beyond Release', K. Whitehouse, 2007, Home Office

- Drug users unable to contribute to household finances.
- Income diverted away from home by drug users with access to family budget.
- Drug related debts.
- Fines, bail related to offending.



- Parental imprisonment is associated with instability in children's care and living arrangements, even after controlling for parental substance misuse and mental health problems.
- children of women prisoners are most likely to be cared for outside the home while their mothers are in prison with only 5% of children of female prisoners remaining in the family home.



- ‘Hidden Harm’ enquiry found that only 37% of fathers and 64% of mothers with a serious drug problems were still living with their children. Most children living with other relatives: about 5% were in care.
- Caring responsibilities lead to financial strain through kinship care- ‘spreading’ poverty -child remains in a poor household.



Impact of parental imprisonment on children and young people

- poor emotional well-being, disruptive behaviour, low self-esteem, and significant mental health difficulties.
- poor education achievement.
- Increased risk of offending behaviour.
- Stigma, isolation, exclusion.
- The longer term impact of the imprisonment of a parent and a range of linked issues contribute and reinforce the propensity for poverty and social exclusion through the life-course





Income poverty

- **Financial assistance:** Ensure that prisoners' families receive adequate benefits to overcome loss of income.
- **Reduce costs:** Provide free transport or financial assistance for prison visits. Reduce the cost of telephone calls between home and prison.
- **Prisoner employment:** provide prisoners with paid work while in custody and increase work schemes that employ former prisoners.



Service and participation poverty

- **Communication:** Give children's caregivers advice and information on providing clear and honest explanations about parental absence to children.
- **Placement:** Children need stable care arrangements during parental imprisonment, ideally with families and friends.
- **Contact:** Increase children's opportunities to maintain contact with their imprisoned parent, in particular through child-centred visiting arrangements in prisons.



Service and participation poverty.

- **Therapy:** Offer counselling and therapeutic services to children of prisoners to help them cope with separation.
- **Education:** Gloucestershire LEA has developed a policy for the education of children with a parent or close relative in prison. The policy aims to raise awareness of the needs of children and young people affected by family imprisonment, secure their educational achievement and attendance and promote social inclusion



Service and participation poverty.

- **Parenting interventions:** parenting styles are important predictors of child development and parenting interventions have been shown to be effective.
- **Family support:** Nearly half of all prisoners lose contact with their families whilst in prison. For women, difficulties in maintaining contact with their families are exacerbated by being held further away from home. Research shows that prisoners who maintain contact with their families are six times less likely to re-offend.