

GOOD PRACTICE GUIDANCE FOR THE  
SUPPORT OF FAMILIES AFFECTED BY  
IMPRISONMENT  
Criminal Justice Family Support Network

March 2015

## Good Practice Guidance for the Support of Families Affected by Imprisonment

### Criminal Justice Family Support Network

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## Introduction

### **Who are we?**

The Criminal Justice Family Support Network is a forum of local and national voluntary sector organisations providing support to families affected by imprisonment throughout Scotland, as all or part of their remit. Services from group members include financial advice, counselling, addiction services, and family support. Facilitated by Families Outside, the Network aims to share practice and raise awareness across the voluntary and statutory sectors of what support is available where, consequently enabling members to refer families to the most appropriate support in their area and, importantly, to identify gaps in support.

Families affected by imprisonment are a heterogeneous group and, as such, their needs are diverse and varied. Families of prisoners are often described as the invisible victims of crime, experiencing financial challenges, poorer mental and physical health, and being targeted and isolated in the community as they carry the stigma and shame of their loved one's offence. Families are also often excluded from decision making processes that affect them directly. The Network recognises the needs of families to access support in their own right. It aims to promote positive change, reduce stigma, and promote families as key partners in their own right as well as in the reduction of risk and reoffending.

### **What is the Guidance for?**

The Network has produced this Good Practice Guidance with the aim of ensuring organisations and individuals who come into contact with these families, in or out of the criminal justice sector, are best informed and engaged to provide better support for families affected by imprisonment. The Guidance has been written for professionals working with families, whether from voluntary or statutory organisations, and can be used by families themselves. It gathers together evidence from research and practice, drawing on the expertise of Network members throughout Scotland.

In drafting this Guidance, the Network recognises regional variations in the resources available for families, especially in remote areas. The Guidance should nevertheless be of value in highlighting issues and approaches relevant to families affected by imprisonment. We hope that this will encourage professionals in every area to recognise the impact of imprisonment and the importance of helping and empowering families who experience this, adapting their own approaches as necessary to provide the best possible support.

The Guidance is a 'living' document which the Network will update as the landscape for families changes. The most up to date version can be found on the Families Outside website, [www.familiesoutside.org.uk](http://www.familiesoutside.org.uk)

Any suggestions and/or comments about this Guidance document should be sent to [admin@familiesoutside.org.uk](mailto:admin@familiesoutside.org.uk)

## Support in their Own Right

When someone is sent to prison, the consequences are felt not just by the prisoner but also by their circle of family and friends. The pain of separation may be a major consequence, but there are also practical issues the family may face on top of the fear of how they will cope.

For many, the experience of imprisonment aggravates underlying problems that are already putting strains on family life including financial hardship, social isolation, poor self-esteem, childcare problems, health problems, relationship difficulties, domestic violence, substance misuse, and the threat of homelessness.

There is still a tendency to see a family's needs for support in the context of the prisoner's situation and the role families can play in reducing reoffending.

However, they need recognition and support for their own needs, in their own right, in the community.

Whether they wish to maintain contact with their relative or not, families may experience:

- concern for the prisoner and what is happening to them;
- financial problems – changes to the household income through losing a wage earner or reduction in welfare benefits. There are also added costs of visiting prison and providing money for the prisoner;
- housing issues – tenancy or mortgage difficulties can lead to enforced relocation, as can the need to escape harassment from neighbours and local community;
- stigma;
- anxiety and distress;
- worry about what to tell the children;
- behavioural problems of children.

In any situation of stress, having access to accurate information can assist someone to make sense of what is happening and to feel more in control.

Families need access to:

- information concerning the prison and prisoner; information on prison regimes such as visiting, sending in property, daily routines, and help available for the prisoner;
- information and a sense of involvement at all stages of the imprisonment – initial custody through to release;
- information relating to their family situation, e.g. benefit advice, housing advice, help with children;
- emotional support.

The importance of the maintenance of family ties in reducing reoffending rates is largely recognised. However, from the family's point of view, it can be extremely challenging to keep these ties going when they are under pressure because of the other issues they are facing. Recognition of these needs, and provision of avenues of support and information, can go some way to alleviating families' stress. Strengthened and supported, the outcomes for the family (and thus the prisoner) are improved.

## The 'Whole Family' Approach

The link between family support and reduced recidivism is increasingly recognized. The role families can play in effective resettlement is acknowledged in several research papers and policy reports. Promoting positive relationships between prisoners and families therefore is essential; prisoners without family support during their imprisonment are between two and six times more likely to offend in the first year after release than those with active family interest.<sup>1</sup> However in addition to the contribution prisoners' families make to desistance, supporting these families is a human rights issue as they are not themselves offenders. The Whole Family Approach seeks to address both perspectives.



Circle's Families Affected by Imprisonment project provides support to prisoners and their families, taking a whole family approach, to promote positive and sustained family relationships.

When a parent goes into prison, it affects the whole family. Family members and the parent may be angry, sad, ashamed, feel lost or sometimes even relieved. At this difficult time, the family may want to hide from services, as they perhaps feel judged, overwhelmed, and powerless. But this is when they may need support most; someone has gone to prison, which means something has changed for the family.

When someone goes to prison agencies and services often focus on the prisoner alone. With a 'whole family' approach, the needs and views of all the family members are considered, and the strengths within the family are identified and built on.

A Circle worker meets the parent in prison and at the same time meets the family outside. The 'whole family' approach aims wherever possible for families to be connected with the parent in prison and remain connected when the parent returns to the community. In planning for this, work is undertaken to prepare the parent inside for release, while at the same time preparing the family.

Circle's support is practical, emotional and relational. It meets the full range of needs within each family and strengthens the ability of family members to provide care and support to each other. Workers form trusting relationships with parents and families, encouraging them to progress and working in response to individual needs. They promote positive parenting, tackle the stigma and stereotyping felt by families, mediate and advocate for families.

The support plan is consistently monitored and reviewed and families are challenged to remain engaged with the agreement. Workers work in close partnership with other local agencies, particularly between children services and adult services and signpost to other services where appropriate.

While the 'whole family' approach is recognised as best practice, there are times when this may not always be in the best interest of the family. In some cases, the family members outside may be better off separating themselves from the person in prison. Families should have that choice.

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<sup>1</sup> Prisoners who maintain family ties are up to six times less likely to reoffend after release (Holt & Miller 1972; Hairston 1991). Exact estimates vary, with the lowest rate - 39% - cited by the Ministry of Justice in 2009 (Ministry of Justice and Department for Children, Schools & Families) 2009

## Accessing Families

Access to information on a raft of issues is crucial for families of prisoners, yet families do not readily seek support. Pugh and Lanskey<sup>2</sup> found that 72% of families visiting prisons were not receiving support from any outside agency, despite the many issues they faced. Family members may be reluctant to come forward and ask for help because of the stigma of imprisonment and its isolating effects. Families can be unsure who to turn to or what to ask.

On the service provision side, organisations have no easy way to identify families. Criminal justice services have no statutory obligation to tell education, health, housing, or other support services that someone's family member has been sent to prison, nor do people in prison always want their families to know they are there.

Organisations that could be useful in the support of families do not always recognise prisoners' families as a target group falling within their remit or take proactive steps to publicise the availability of their services to them. The lack of structure and clear responsibility in the provision of information to families means that many people will be ignorant of what supports are available.

Courts, police, prisons and prison staff are obviously a main conduit and access point for provision of support and information to families, about the prisoner and prison regime in the main, and signposting to community support information. The police in particular can play a key role in providing information, as they are the first point of contact.

In the wider community where families are less visible, the challenge in accessing them is greater. The isolating stigma of having someone in prison should be addressed.

What can help?

- Court based family support and information can provide help to the family when someone is appearing in court.
- Prisons should create a welcoming prison environment for families where they will feel comfortable and safe, encouraging families to talk and ask questions.
- Prison staff should receive training on the impact on families of imprisonment.
- Prisons should forge links with community organisations providing practical and emotional support and staff should signpost accordingly.
- Prisons should have full time dedicated Family Contact teams.
- Family Induction should be available in prisons (see later chapter).
- Prison Visitors' Centres have the potential to provide support to families (later chapter).
- Posters, leaflets and books highlighting the issues for prisoners' families and support available should be placed in public places such as libraries, GP surgeries, schools.
- Staff of universal statutory services should receive awareness training around issues facing families of a prisoner.
- Service providers should work together to promote a co-ordinated, targeted response to developing clear routes for accessing support e.g. begin discussions around information sharing, consider how offers of support can be made directly to the family at point of imprisonment.

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<sup>2</sup> Pugh, G. and Lanskey, C. (2011) "'Dads Inside and Out': study of risk and protective factors in the resettlement of imprisoned fathers with their families". Conference paper for What's new in Research and Evaluation? Informing our work with prisoners and offenders and their families. Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge, 19 May 2011.



South West Scotland Community Justice Authority's multi-agency Family Strategy Group developed an information card for families, which was piloted by a division of Strathclyde Police. Containing contact details of local and national support organisations, the cards were given to families when an arrest was made from their home.



voicing the needs  
of families affected  
by imprisonment

Families Outside provides a training package on the Impact of Imprisonment on Children and Families which is offered to prison staff and community organisations, helping them to understand families' situations and how they can help.



Until funding ceased in December 2014, The Lighthouse Foundation's Court Project had a support worker based in the Sheriff Courts in Ayr and Kilmarnock who provided support to families of someone involved in the Court system, explaining processes and helping maintain contact with the family member. Links were made with the Lighthouse's family support workers at HMP Kilmarnock.

## Children with a Family Member in Prison

*Whilst this section focuses on the negative effect imprisonment can have for children, it is also important to recognise that for some (who may have been living with substance misuse or domestic violence), the imprisonment of a family member can be a welcome relief.*

Children can face multiple long-term negative consequences when they have a close family member sent to prison. The trauma of the separation can be akin to bereavement, but for the child (and family) of a prisoner, there is not the community sympathy, understanding, or recognition of the event that can occur with a death. Children of prisoners can experience family breakdown, financial hardship, and extremes of stigma which put them at risk of poorer social and educational outcomes.

An estimated 27,000 children each year in Scotland experience a parent's imprisonment. This is, however, only an approximate figure (extrapolated from the Scottish Prison Service's Prisoner Survey 2011), as there is no statutory duty to collect this information.

Children of prisoners:

- suffer mental health problems up to three times the rate of other children<sup>3</sup>;
- are at greater risk of substance misuse and of imprisonment themselves in later life<sup>4</sup>;
- can be subject to multiple care arrangements (and the instability that can bring with school moves and separation from friends);
- can suffer from the stigma and fear of disclosure and face bullying at school;
- can exhibit aggressive and regressive behaviours;
- can experience the same reactions as those of children whose parents have died – stress, fear, anger, sadness, guilt.

What can help?

- Mitigation of the trauma of witnessing a parent's arrest by police being sensitive to the needs of any children, providing a safe place where they can go during searches and allowing the child to say goodbye
- Identification of children affected by imprisonment at point of remand or sentence
- An inclusive school ethos encouraging carers to inform school of the change in circumstances
- Use of child impact assessments at key stages (sentencing, release, Home detention curfew)
- Providing information to children about what has happened to their relative.
- Reassurance that the relative is well and being looked after
- Reassurance to children that they are not guilty nor to blame
- Continued contact with their relative (where this is in the best interests of the child) through child-friendly visits, phone calls, letters

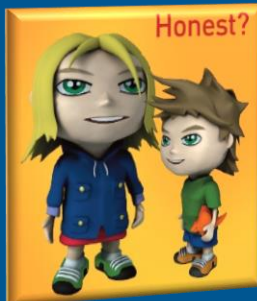
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<sup>3</sup> Philbrick, D. (1997) Child and Adolescent Mental Health and the Prisoner's Child. Durham : NEPACS  
University of Huddersfield's COPING Report 2013 : Children of Prisoners : Interventions and mitigations to strengthen mental health, reports a pan European figure of 25%

<sup>4</sup> Farrington, D.P., Barnes, G.C. and Lambert, S. (1996) " The concentration of offending in families." *Legal and Criminal Psychology* 1, 47 -63



Families Outside has produced an information sheet about talking to a child about imprisonment as well as age-appropriate booklets for children and young people themselves, explaining what happens when a family member goes to prison <http://www.familiesoutside.org.uk/kids/>



families  
outside



The award-winning American children's TV programme, Sesame Street, has introduced a character whose parent is in prison and developed a downloadable toolkit - Little Children, Big Challenges: Incarceration - for organisations and carers, to help them support a child affected by imprisonment.

Visit the [Sesame Street](#) website

The Salvation Army, who run Edinburgh Prison Visitors' Centre, worked with the children, parents and carers using their service to produce three colourful booklets around talking to children about imprisonment. 'Visiting Dad' and 'Visiting Mum' were created by children for children and use childrens' illustrations and words to describe visiting Edinburgh Prison; similarly illustrated, 'A Parents' Guide' aims to help parents to speak to their child about imprisonment.



## Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC)

The Scottish Government's *Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC)* approach is about how practitioners across all services for children and adults meet the needs of children and young people, working together where necessary to ensure they reach their full potential.

This initiative aims to promote the sharing of information across organisations to ensure support is available for children when they need it, to improve their life chances.

The Children and Young People's Act (Scotland) 2014 enshrines GIRFEC into Scottish law, underpinned by the SHANARRI principles for child wellbeing (Safe, Healthy, Active, Nurtured, Achieving, Respected, Responsible, Included). For children, this means that any issue that potentially affects their wellbeing should be reported to their Named Person (usually a midwife, health visitor, or head teacher, depending on the age of the child). This can include issues such as their carer's mental health, substance misuse, or arrest and imprisonment.

For children affected by imprisonment, the framework provides an opportunity for raising their profile by:

- recognising the children of prisoners as a vulnerable group (*although for some children the imprisonment of a family member may be a positive change*);
- starting the discussion about the collecting and sharing of information about these children and promoting access to appropriate support when necessary;
- developing cross boundary links between community services and prisons - parents' views are included in the development of a child's plan, and this should include the views of a parent in prison when appropriate.

Public sector and voluntary agencies staff should be trained in understanding the impact of imprisonment on children, and avenues of support for them.

In conjunction with the Scottish Prison Service, Families Outside has developed CPD training for teachers. This involves bringing teachers into their local prison to experience what a child might face when visiting a parent and, being given an understanding of how a child may be affected by imprisonment.

## Prison Visitors' Centres

Prison Visitors' Centres have tremendous potential to support people visiting prisons and consequently to maintain family ties. Visitors' Centres can have many functions and ways of working; much of what they do depends on local resources and requirements. Crucially, however, visitors need access to support before and after visits; effective visitors' services must take this into account in their location and staffing.

This section sets out basic elements you could usefully consider in setting up a resource for visitors that will be used and will meet the needs of people who visit your prison. More detailed information can be found in the HMPS/Federation of Prisoners' Families Support Groups publication, *Setting up a prison visitors' centre* (1998); *Prison Visitors' Centres: An ongoing debate*; and *Recognising Quality: An evaluation toolkit for prison visitors' centres* (Action for Prisoners' Families, pact, and Charities Evaluation Services 2011).

### **What is the purpose of your visitors' centre?**

Good practice suggests that such a resource is for advocacy, information, practical and emotional support, refreshment, and respite.

Some Visitors' Centres have a prison function such as booking in of visitors, handing in of property and private cash, and lockers for visitors' belongings. Others have no such function. The benefit of the former is that visitors are obliged to attend the Centre, meaning they become aware of and have access to the information and support provided for them. The benefit of the latter is that it provides a visibly independent service focused exclusively on support for visitors.

### **Where will it be located?**

Ideally a visitors' centre should be a separate building near the main entrance to the prison. The Centre should be easy for visitors to see but not openly visible to passers-by (e.g. no windows facing directly onto a public road where people can see in to the Centre).

At the very least, the Centre should be outside the secure area of the prison. This makes it accessible to people not attending visits (e.g. those providing transport but not going in, and to those who have been turned away from the visit for some reason). It is also more accessible to external agencies that attend to provide support, and allows visitors to take materials, leaflets, etc. to put with their personal belongings. This is not possible when such facilities are located beyond the searching area. If a prison wishes facilities for visitors to be accessed alongside the prisoners they are visiting, this should be in addition to an external resource.

## What facilities should it include?

At the very least, the Centre needs to have:

- information for visitors from a range of relevant support services
- refreshments (ideally hot and cold food and drinks)
- family-friendly and age-appropriate signage
- clean and accessible toilets and baby changing facilities
- staff who are available to answer questions and advocate on behalf of visitors who may be experiencing difficulties
- a private space where families can speak with staff in confidence
- age-appropriate toys and activities
- comfortable seating

At best, this should include:

- Independent staff trained with relevant skills (e.g. family support work, counselling, parenting, community development, playwork)
- Regular input from community-based service providers and supports
- Tables (round, or with rounded edges) and soft seating that can be moved for flexible use of the space
- Support designed to meet national outcomes
- Independent staff trained with relevant skills (e.g. family support work, counselling, parenting, community development, playwork)
- A healthy eating café
- Ethos and input that complies with local, national, and international standards and policies (e.g. GIRFEC, National Parenting Strategy, Curriculum for Excellence, Equally Well, UNCRC, UNHRC)

## Who should staff it?

A visitors' centre should definitely have staff. Staff members can be entirely independent from the prison, such as from a family-focused organisation; they can be employed by the prison; or they can be a combination of the two. All of this work could usefully be supported with trained and supervised volunteers.

While the temptation may be to staff a visitors' resource with prison staff, research into visitors' centres shows that prison-run centres quickly shift their focus from a family resource to a prison resource. If a visitors' centre is to fulfil its potential as a resource for support, information, and advocacy, staff should be fully independent from the prison, or at least employ a mixture of prison staff and external workers.

Open collaboration between independent staff and prison staff has proved very useful in existing visitors' centres, for example through input from Family Contact Officers, prison-based social workers, and prison- and community-based health workers.

Finally, paid staff with a focus on the provision of support and information to visitors should be a priority for the Centre. Research into the visitors' centre at HMP Edinburgh found that 82% of visitors accessed information following the appointment of a development worker, while only 16% said they had accessed information at the Centre prior to the worker's appointment.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Loucks, N., Nugent, B., and Stalker, E. (2009) *Edinburgh Prison Visitors' Centre Survey of Visitors and Staff*. Edinburgh: Families Outside, on behalf of the Robertson Trust.

## National Prison Visitors' Centre Steering Group

### **NPVCSG Purpose**

The purpose of the National Prison Visitors' Centre Steering Group (NPVCSG) is to provide a strategy for the creation and sustainable support for new and existing prison visitor centres so that every prison facility in Scotland is able to provide appropriate support to families and friends visiting a prisoner. The group also works to support the creation and training of local groups to oversee local service delivery, to develop and review benchmarking for core standards in PVC's and to provide methods of research and analysis of the impact of PVC's on the lives of those who use them.

Its primary model of achieving long-term sustainability for the strategy is by working with Government through the Public Sector Partnership (PSP) process. To that end, the NPVCSG, having created one PSP (Public Social Partnership), sees itself as a continuing PSP and would intend on developing its relationship with the Scottish Government on that basis.

### **NPVCSG Membership**

Membership of the NPVCSG is open to all organisations with an interest in the provision of supporting services for prisoners and their families, academics and other experts with experience in such services, the Scottish Prison Service, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, government departments who indicate an interest, other experts as identified and invited by the group. The breadth of experience amongst the membership will remain under review.

Participating organisations make their own arrangements as to the method by which individuals are put forward to serve on the NPVCSG.

The Edinburgh Prison Visitors' Centre is in a purpose-built building just outside the prison, owned by the Onward Trust and managed by the Salvation Army.

The Perth Prison Visitors Support & Advice Centre is managed by Crossreach, located in an outbuilding owned by HMP Perth

The Visitors' Centre at HMP Kilmarnock is based in a prison-owned portakabin and staffed by HMP Kilmarnock. The Lighthouse Foundation has staff based regularly within the Centre to support visitors.

The Croft Visitors' Centre is a community-based centre run by a local charity to support visitors to HMP Barlinnie.

Cornton Vale Visitors' Centre is run by the Stirling Interfaith Group in an outbuilding owned by the prison.

At HMYOI Polmont, a double decker bus has been customised to provide a supportive and welcoming place for visitors. Staffed by Church of Scotland workers, the Family Bus contains a kitchen, toilet, confidential space, comfy seating and toys.

The Visitors' Centre at HMP Grampian is a prison-owned purpose-built building located just outside the prison, staffed by Action for Children and working in cooperation with the prison.


Addiewell Visitors' Centre is located immediately within the main entrance of the prison, staffed by Families Outside but with prison-based functions carried out by prison staff.

## Prison Information Sessions for Families or ‘Family Induction’

Families of prisoners can receive little information about what happens in prison and little involvement in decisions that affect them. This is the case whether a family is experiencing prison for the first time or has had family members in prison for years.

The SPS National Visitors’ Survey 2011<sup>6</sup> reported that 59% of visitors who participated in the survey thought they would benefit from family induction. They were most interested in learning about a prisoner’s progression (61%), followed by family support (48%) and the prison regime (45%), while almost a third (31%) wanted information about relationship support.

*Keeping in Touch: The Case for Family Support Work in Prison*<sup>7</sup> noted that family contact staff unanimously viewed family induction sessions as a beneficial opportunity to engage with prisoners’ families. Sessions that provide “... a clear explanation... of ‘what and when’ to visitors would settle their minds and perhaps stop any abuses of the trust element within our visit set up” (p. 17). Staff believed the sessions provided useful contacts with families that can be helpful to the prison during difficult decisions. Further:



It would allow the family to ask questions about regimes, drugs, etc. and would hear the ‘truth’. We do this at present but only if someone asks about it.

Properly resourced and organised, these sessions could be really beneficial for making and maintaining contact with prisoners’ families, explaining routines and processes - from our perspective - while introducing the FCDO teams as the first point of contact.

Families who have had no prior knowledge/involvement in our penal system find it very difficult to get basic information. I believe prisons have a fundamental responsibility to provide this information, not just at the outset but throughout a prisoner’s sentence.

<sup>6</sup> Carnie, J. and Broderick, R. (2011) *Visitors Survey 2011: Strategy and Evaluation*. Edinburgh: Scottish Prison Service.

<sup>7</sup> Loucks, N. (2004) *Keeping in Touch: The Case for Family Support Work in Prison*. London: Prison Reform Trust.

The report went on to say that “Provision of information was particularly important for families. Several commented that induction for families, security-cleared photographs from inside the prison, or videos, would be helpful for them to picture what life was like for their families inside” (p. 17).

This guidance highlights elements of good practice for delivery of information sessions to families of prisoners, or ‘family induction’. These are based on the experiences of prisons throughout the UK and on feedback from families:

- Include all families (e.g. not just families of first-time prisoners).
- Consider separate induction/information session for families of prisoners on remand.
- Attach the induction session to a visit session, ideally an extra visit.
- Include photos of the inside of the prison, or ideally a tour of the facilities; people need to be able to picture where their family member is.
- Consider the needs of the families attending (childcare, work commitments, timing).
- Be flexible and consider the needs of your own population. This may require an element of ‘trial and error’ to see what works best for your establishment.
- Include outside agencies that support families and/or prisoners.
- Provide information about APVU, highlighting the extra entitlement for the extra visit session.
- Conduct sessions on a regular basis (e.g. monthly), but not so frequently that people do not attend.
- Ensure sessions are widely publicised and in simple language (posters/leaflets, letters, through prisoners including leaflets in cells for new receptions).
- Book attendance in advance.
- Persevere! Families may be sceptical at first, and word may take a while to get out.



## Families and Substance Misuse

*'Families deserve help in their own right because they experience significant harms including mental and physical health problems, suffering from crime and financial hardship, when someone in their family uses drugs. They are more likely than families of non-users to be diagnosed with their own medical condition (most commonly depression and other psychological problems associated with stress) to levels of seriousness comparable to psychiatric outpatients.'*

ADFAM

There are many similarities in the experiences of families affected by imprisonment and those of families affected by substance misuse.

For families affected by alcohol and drugs, there can be health, social and financial impacts. However, many family members do not recognise their own needs or believe themselves deserving of support in their own right. Stigma around substance misuse and the mistaken belief that the family is somehow responsible for their loved one's alcohol or drugs misuse often contribute to delaying seeking help and support. Many family members speak about the sheer stress of their situations and the resultant impact on their own health, and often only through voicing this is there a realisation they may need support too.

Families often feel excluded from the assessment and treatment process. They have voiced concerns around their loved one's treatment with some feeling they are not involved. Families need to get information on recovery choices and to have increased family-inclusive practice within treatment services. It is families who often help initiate treatment, positively affect the course and outcome of treatment, influence the likelihood of relapse, and support long-term maintenance of change or sustained recovery.

Difficulties families face include:

- Knowing where to go for help
- Financial difficulties, especially for kinship carers
- Social exclusion
- Managing emotions (anger, distress, loss, and grief)
- Coping with substance using behaviour, such as having property stolen by the user and being pressured for money
- The impact of the substance user going to prison and the effects associated with this such as cost and demands of visits

### **The impact of parental substance misuse on children**

Parental substance misuse impacts on children's lives in many ways. This issue is important because the problem is widespread. It is difficult to be precise about the numbers of parents and children affected by substance misuse, however an estimated 40,000-60,000 children in Scotland are affected by their parents' drug use, and 36,000-51,000 are affected by parental alcohol misuse.<sup>8</sup> The misuse of drugs and/or alcohol may adversely affect the ability of parents to attend to the emotional, physical and developmental needs of their children in both the short and long term.

An immediate effect of this can be the failure for parents to provide consistent practical or emotional care; in the long term, it can seriously harm the well-being and life chances of the

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<sup>8</sup> Scottish Government (2013) *Updated Good Practice Guidance for Working with Children and Families affected by Substance Misuse. Getting Our Priorities Right*. Edinburgh

child, including their health, educational attainment, and future employment prospects. Other family members can also bear the financial, emotional, and social costs: children of parents who misuse substances are also likely to enter the care of relatives, who themselves may require help and support in caring for the children.

Children of parents who misuse substances may experience:

- Behavioural/ psychiatric problems
- Social Isolation
- Stigma/shame
- Fear of being taken in to care
- Concern for their parent
- Taking on a caring role
- Engaging in substance misuse themselves
- Physical, educational and emotional problems
- Poor interactions with their parents who may be inconsistent and emotionally unresponsive as a result of their substance misuse

#### **What do families want and need from support services?**

- Empathy and understanding of the reality of their situation;
- Alerts to their needs and welfare, not just those of the substance-using relative;
- Encouragement to ensure these needs are met;
- Empowerment to cope better;
- Confidentiality as families are often concerned their children may be taken in to care
- Reliability;
- A non-judgemental attitude;
- Accurate and honest information, advice, and referral to organisations that can help with benefits, family law, housing, drugs, and alcohol
- Support, guidance, and financial help;
- Training in mediation or counselling to cope with the behaviour of the substance user, family breakdown, and unhealthy dependency.



Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol & Drugs (SFAD) is a charity supporting families across Scotland who are affected by drug or alcohol misuse of a family member and raising awareness of issues facing them. SFAD has been commissioned by East Dunbartonshire Alcohol & Drugs Partnership (ADP) to develop family support locally. The development officer post is based in Kirkintilloch Community Health Centre and focuses on local priorities identified, including facilitation of family support groups and building partnerships with local statutory and voluntary services.



Vocal (Voices of Carers across Lothian) runs a support service for families affected by drugs and alcohol.

They have developed The Alcohol Charter for Family and Friends, listing the rights and expectations of carers.

Their report - "Family role in recovery: The positive impact of family support on recovery from addiction" - examines and evidences the positive contribution of family members and carers to the recovery journey when they are supported in their own right and included as equal partners in the recovering addicts' care [www.vocal.org.uk](http://www.vocal.org.uk)

The Conversation Café is a partnership of the Scottish Prison Service, Phoenix Futures, and Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs hosted a conversation café within HMP Edinburgh for both prisoners and their families to openly speak about how addictions had impacted family life.

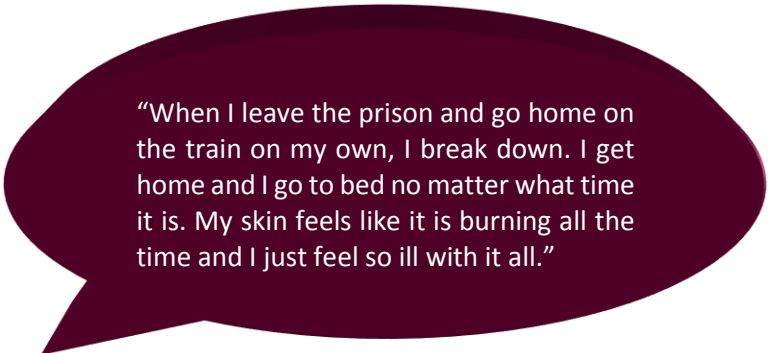
#### Further reading:

Coppelle, A and Templeton, L. (2012) *Supporting adult family members of people with drug problems in Scotland*. UK Drug Policy Committee [www.ukdpc.org.uk](http://www.ukdpc.org.uk)

Effective Interventions Unit (2002) *Supporting families and carers of drug users; A review* <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2002/11/15774/13421>

## Families' Health and Wellbeing

Families of prisoners seek support for a variety of reasons, the most common of which is emotional support – more specifically for emotional and mental wellbeing or 'feeling unable to cope any more'.



"When I leave the prison and go home on the train on my own, I break down. I get home and I go to bed no matter what time it is. My skin feels like it is burning all the time and I just feel so ill with it all."

Parental imprisonment was found to be a risk factor for mental health issues, with children of prisoners having three times the risk for poor mental health compared to their peers.<sup>9</sup> Research from the University of California at Irvine<sup>10</sup> has identified significant health problems amongst the children of prisoners, noting that "for some types of health outcomes, parental incarceration can be more detrimental to a child's wellbeing than divorce or the death of a parent."

Despite this vulnerability to experiencing mental health problems (and the potential negative impact on their physical health), the families of prisoners are not generally on the agenda of the statutory agencies such as health. National and local accountability for the wellbeing of prisoners' children and families has been poor.

### What would help?

- Training for health professionals on recognising and dealing with issues around imprisonment.
- Creation of a healthcare community which is aware and supportive of families affected by imprisonment.
- Promotion of support information for children and families who are affected by imprisonment through health outlets (leaflets, posters, helplines).
- Health professionals liaising with partner agencies (sharing information appropriately whilst recognising the family's right to confidentiality).
- Visitors' Centres at every prison to provide a supportive atmosphere, opportunities to talk with someone about worries, and access peer and other support.
- Routine assessment of the impact of imprisonment upon the family.

### Family Members as Carers

For many family members, their concern is for the welfare of their loved one in prison, particularly if they have been very much involved in their care in the community because of health issues or supported them because of a learning disability. The family can hold information about medication, behaviour and health risks. The Scottish Government's *Caring Together – The Carers' Strategy for Scotland 2010 - 2015* places a clear emphasis on treating carers as equal and expert partners with knowledge and experience, especially about the person they care for.

- Prison staff and Healthcare teams should recognise the positive input a family can have and be open to their continued involvement with care whilst in prison.

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<sup>9</sup> Philbrick, D. (1997) *Child and Adolescent Mental Health and the Prisoner's Child*. Durham : NEPACS

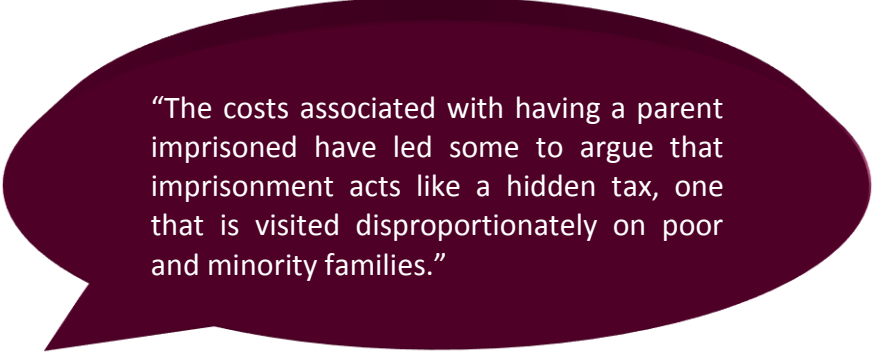
<sup>10</sup> "Parental incarceration can be worse for a child than divorce or death of a parent." 16 August 2014, <http://phys.org/news/2014-08-parental-incarceration-worse-child-divorce.html>.

## Families and Finances

*This section is based on research carried out by Donald Dickie on behalf of Families Outside.<sup>11</sup>*

Imprisonment can have a significant impact on a families' financial situation. Research has shown that prisoners' families are vulnerable to financial instability, poverty, debt and housing disruption following the imprisonment of a family member. In tandem to the loss of income, families are further disadvantaged in subsidising the imprisonment by sending in prisoners' money for clothing and electronic goods as well as taking on care of prisoners' children.<sup>12</sup>

In 2007, the Quaker United Nations office published a paper on the impact of parental imprisonment on children and noted that (quote reference<sup>13</sup>):



“The costs associated with having a parent imprisoned have led some to argue that imprisonment acts like a hidden tax, one that is visited disproportionately on poor and minority families.”

The financial difficulties that come as a direct result of imprisonment are over and above the deprived economic circumstances in which so many of the families live and experience before and after the prison sentence.

### Key Points:

- The negative effects of prison on family health and relationships are made worse by the financial difficulties.
- Imprisonment usually leads to a drop in income. Reduction and delay in payments of welfare benefit are significant stressors.
- Housing and housekeeping problems arise as costs remain the same despite the drop in income.
- Families are often forced to look for financial support from extended family and charities, and loans can lead to spiralling debts.
- Kinship carers face financial pressures when they take on the care of a child.
- Families face major financial outlay associated with visiting and supporting a loved one in prison. Travel to a visit, refreshments, postage, telephone calls, and cash paid into prison for use by the prisoner all place a drain on financial resources.

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<sup>11</sup> Dickie, D. (2013) *The Financial Impact of Imprisonment upon Families*. In *Brief No 8*. Edinburgh: Families Outside

<sup>12</sup> Smith, R., Grimshaw, R., Romeo, R., and Knapp, M. (2007) *Poverty and Disadvantage among Prisoners' Families*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

<sup>13</sup> Robertson, O. (2007) *The Impact of Parental Imprisonment on Children*. Geneva: Quaker United Nations

## What would help?

- Provision of advice to families on the financial implications of imprisonment and advocacy on their behalf to secure correct and timeous benefit payments
- Ensuring that families have access to information and advice about kinship care and financial support
- Prison pre-release planning to involve the whole family and take into account the financial problems likely to be faced, especially in relation to housing and benefits
- Social Workers and prison staff to be aware of (and inform families of) financial assistance that is available to support home leave
- Provision of information to families around the PPC (Prisoner's Personal Cash) scheme e.g. weekly spend limits
- Lower costs for prisoner making phone calls home
- Promotion of the Assisted Prison Visits Scheme
- Free/low cost transport schemes to visit prisons
- Visitors' Centres at each prison to enable, among numerous other services and support, the provision of low cost refreshments for visitors



The Scottish Legal Aid Board has funded partnership projects to provide money advice and financial capability training to families of prisoners at HMP's Addiewell, Barlinnie, Edinburgh and Grampian.



Sacro operates a travel scheme from Glasgow or Edinburgh to some prisons. using volunteer drivers.



Castlemilk Timebank works in collaboration with the Scottish Prison Service. Within the prison project, prisoners volunteer their time to assist other prisoners. The initiative helps to recognise and reward the volunteering that prisoners undertake to contribute to the prison's community life. However, instead of the prisoners spending the credits they have earned on accessing services for themselves. they donate

## Support for Relationships

Couple and family relationships are under stress when someone goes to prison, and imprisonment carries with it a high probability of family breakdown. There are practical difficulties with visiting someone in prison – distance, cost, visiting times. There are communication challenges too, with the cost of phone calls, low literacy rates for letter writing, and lack of privacy or time at a visit to discuss issues and emotions fully. Changes in roles in the family with one member being absent can impact on family dynamics and present challenges upon release.

- 43% of sentenced prisoners and 48% of remand prisoners lost contact with their families when they entered prison<sup>14</sup>
- Only about half of prisoners use their minimum entitlement to visits<sup>15</sup>
- In a study of prisoners released after their convictions were quashed, only 8 of 22 marriages survived, with 11 ending during custody and 3 ending after release<sup>16</sup>

### What helps?

- Transport schemes providing affordable direct travel to prisons
- Family Events at prisons
- Visitors' Centres
- Virtual visits/Skype
- E-mail, such as via the E-mail a Prisoner scheme
- In-cell phones
- Temporary Home Leave
- Private Family Visits – overnight stays for both partner and children in a domestic setting in order to experience family life
- Family mediation and relationship counselling opportunities for prisoners and families
- Family Contact Officers

A pre-release relationship course is run at HMP Barlinnie involving SPS staff and Relationship Scotland counsellors. This brings prisoners and their partners together to promote communication and discussion around release issues.

Prison e-mail service has previously only allowed prisoners to receive e-mail, but now HMP Kilmarnock is the first prison in the UK to run a completely electronic service with secure messages and responses via touch screen kiosks.

The Apex Aberdeen office provides a virtual contact centre where friends and family of prisoners can chat via a secure video link to prisoners in Barlinnie, Perth, Polmont and Grampian. Set in a comfortable room, the service is child-friendly and is available outwith office hours.

<sup>14</sup> Social Exclusion Unit (2002) *Reducing Re-offending by Ex-Prisoners*. London: Home Office

<sup>15</sup> HM Inspectorates of Prisons and Probation for England and Wales (2001) *Through the Prison Gate : A Joint Thematic Review by HMP Inspectorates of Prisons and Probation*. London: Home Office

<sup>16</sup> Grounds, A. (2009) *The effects of wrongful conviction and imprisonment*. Challenging Crime : A Conference to Celebrate 50 Years of the Institute of Criminology. Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge 24 September 2009.

## Parenting and Imprisonment

Imprisonment is a family experience and has a particular impact on the role of parents both in and out of the prison.

People in prison can find it difficult to feel 'legitimate' in their role as parents, feeling physically and emotionally separated from their child. This can lead to problems upon release, when they may face challenges in reconnecting.

Normally when people struggle with parenting, they can draw on a number of formal and informal supports. For example they can call on the help of friends or family, or speak with a teacher or health visitor. They can look up information in books and on the internet. They can also work through issues with their children as they arise, experimenting with different methods of parenting and means of communication.

In prison, most of these options are limited or non-existent.

In the community, a parent will have to find new ways of coping with a child (who may not be dealing well with the new situation) without the natural ally of a partner. The stigma of imprisonment may prevent them from accessing support for themselves.

### What helps?

- Family Events at prisons
- Children's visits
- Homework Clubs
- Family Learning
- Parenting Programmes
- Government initiatives to support all parents
- Prison play-work
- Extended Family Visits with overnight stays

The Scottish Government's National Parenting Strategy (2012) highlights the need for specific support for parents in prison.

The Scottish Prison Service has developed a parenting strategy, with each prison drawing up action plans to meet the outcomes.

Low Moss prison runs a weekly homework club, where children and their dads work on homework with the support of a volunteer teacher. There is also a weekly Kelvin Scout and Guide Club session held in the Visits Hall, with activities for children visiting a parent at the prison.

Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 places a duty on educational authorities to give advice and information to any parent of a pupil in a state school on matters relating to their education. Families Outside is piloting a scheme linking prisons and schools to facilitate prisoners receiving information about their child's progress. It is hoped that this will grow from report receiving to prisoner/teacher telephone conversations.

Early Years – Scotland (previously known as Scottish Pre –School Play Association) has developed in-prison play sessions involving both parents which promote bonding and the value of play, together with a short Dads' programme for prisoners.



## Involving Families in Risk Assessment and Risk Management

Families have a right to be involved in the management of their loved one's sentences, if the person in prison agrees. Many of the decisions taken impact directly on their lives – e.g. release dates, accommodation, licence conditions, and support for substance misuse.

Families can feel personally responsible for monitoring of the released person, making the phone calls, ensuring appointments are kept, worrying about relapse. They are frequently called upon to provide support and intervention at all hours.

Families are likely to have an intimate knowledge and understanding of the person and are thus well placed to make a positive contribution to discussions about risk management and reducing reoffending.

### Home Detention Curfew (HDC or 'tagging')

This early release process requires a prisoner to have an address at which he or she will stay subject to curfew conditions.

- Families can feel pressured to provide an address for this, as without one the prisoner may not be given early release, and relationships may be strained. Families may agree to provide the accommodation and have someone come to stay with them who may not have been part of the household previously, which can affect even the most stable family dynamics.
- Having someone under curfew at an address can lead to families feeling they need to 'police' the person. Particularly with younger people, an inability to leave the house because of the curfew can lead to tensions within the house.

### What helps?

- The home risk assessment carried out by the Criminal Justice Social Worker should be conducted by a home visit and not by telephone.
- A Child and Family Impact Assessment should be included as part of the application for HDC, with support offered to the family from an appropriate source where needs are identified.
- Families should receive full information about the process and to whom they can speak should questions or difficulties arise.

### Integrated Case Management (ICM)

ICM is concerned with the effective planning of a prisoner's throughcare - identifying supports needed both during custody, and release.

There are two levels of ICM: standard and enhanced. 'Standard' is for prisoners sentenced to less than four years. Support is provided by prison staff to prisoners, and families can be made aware of progress.

The enhanced ICM process is for prisoners with a sentence of over four years and involves multi-agency case conferences to assess and manage the risk of a prisoner reoffending and plan for release. The prisoner is involved in these case conferences, and a family member should normally also be invited.

- It is only with the consent of the prisoner that a family member is invited, yet prisoners do not always understand the relevance of their family member's attendance.
- For many families, first-time contact with prison staff, the physical environment, and the formal business procedures of the meeting can be intimidating.
- The purpose of an ICM is not always explained to families, and they may not understand what the meeting is about or why they have been asked to come to the prison. This can be frightening for families, who may fear that something has happened.
- Distance and cost of travel to the prison and childcare issues can be obstacles to a family member's attendance.

### **What helps?**

- Families should be automatically invited to ICM conferences unless there are clear, evidenced reasons not to do so.
- Invitations to case conferences should state clearly what the ICM process is and who to contact with any queries.
- Consider timing of the meeting and whether there will be any impact on employment / childcare, and give enough notice for alternative arrangements to be made. Promote the Assisted Prison Visits Scheme for help with cost of attending (including childcare expenses).
- Tie in the meeting with a normal visit, or use a video link.
- Offer 'debriefing' support following a meeting.
- Families should receive copies of the notes of the meeting, edited if necessary, regardless of whether they are able to attend.

### **Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)**

MAPPA is the name given to the arrangements for the 'responsible authorities' (police, social work, SPS, and NHS) who are tasked with the management of offenders who pose a serious risk of harm to the public. Family members are not automatically told if someone is subject to MAPPA.

### **What helps?**

- Families should be included in discussions or at least consulted for their input to risk assessment and management.
- Families should receive information about relevant policies and processes such as the Sex Offender Register and any requirements and restrictions for supervision.
- Any information affecting the family should be explained in person and supplemented with clear, written information.
- Families should receive information about to whom they can speak and where they can go for help.

## Family Support Groups

### What is a family support group?

Family support groups are a form of support that brings together family members who are affected by a common issue. This could be for example imprisonment, substance misuse, or mental health problems. Typically, family support groups work to two different models:

- **Peer support** involves a small number of family members coming together on a regular basis to offer each other emotional support; they are not professionally facilitated or connected to any Statutory or Voluntary services.
- **Facilitator led** groups are generally run by, or connected to, a Statutory or Voluntary service. They tend to work with a more structured combination of emotional and practical support and informal learning. It is worth noting that, although these groups may be facilitated, they are also peer-led in that the facilitator will take direction on how the group should work from its members. Family support groups typically meet weekly or once per fortnight for two hours.

### Benefits of family support groups

Family support groups should offer a welcoming, supportive, and non-judgemental environment for family members to share their experiences. Meetings can also include a focus on specific topics such as boundaries or positive communication; have guest speakers; or offer alternative therapies for stress management. Being a member of a family support group can also offer family members the opportunity to meet other families from out with their community. Groups can also provide personal development and informal learning by offering the opportunity to attend workshops and seminars.

Family members who attend support groups have quite often been putting much of their energy into the situation of their loved one, whether because they are in prison, misusing substances, or suffering mental health problems, causing them to overlook their own needs. Attending a family support group can provide the space and support family members need to focus on their own health and wellbeing.

### Basics of setting up a family support group:

The first thing to consider before setting up a family support group is **why**; what is the need you have identified that this group will meet?

Whether the group is being formed by a few family members coming together to support one another or by a service provider, there are a few questions to consider first:

- **Who** will the group be for? Any family members affected by the issue your group is addressing or more specific such as, Kinship Carers or Fathers?
- **What** aims is the group trying to meet? Aims can include offering emotional support or becoming more politically active;
- Has there been a meeting space, day and time organised?
- Does the group have a name in order for it to be advertised?

Once you have established who your group is for, its aims, have named it and organised a meeting space, day and time then your group is ready to begin.

**Other areas of group maintenance to consider:**

- **Costs** - these could include any hire costs for the meeting space, refreshments and promotional literature – also see funding;
- **Confidentiality and contracting** – confidentiality ensures group members can confide personal information about themselves and their families without fear of it being repeated. It is the cornerstone of any support group and helps foster a safe place for sharing. The only exceptions for breaking confidentiality is if you suspect a child to be in danger, or if you suspect or a person has disclosed themselves to be of danger to themselves or someone else. A contract is a written set of guidelines the group produces and agrees to work within. These will include the confidentiality agreement and practical areas such as time keeping and silencing mobile phones;
- **Promotion** – producing literature for the group and using channels such as social networking will help attract new members who need support and will bring your group to the attention of local service providers;
- **Networking** – as a group becomes established, it can be helpful for them to build peer networks with other community groups and Voluntary and Statutory services to help with promotion and offer opportunities for partnership working;
- **Constitution** - adopting a constitution provides a governance structure for the group and increases funding options. Most funders require family support groups to have a constitution;
- **Bank account** – a bank account is necessary for a family support group to hold funds;
- **Funding** – if not self-funded, funds to cover the costs of groups' running costs can be sourced from funders including statutory services, Scottish Prison Service, or Trusts and Charities;
- **Monitoring and evaluation** – using tools to monitor the progress of the group and evaluating the impact it has on its members is best practice, but also necessary if external funding is being used for running costs.

**Stigma**

The reasons family members attend family support groups will attract stigma by their very nature. Stigma can impact the group in various ways including venues resisting leasing out meeting space to groups and having difficulty in attracting new members. However, it is important to remember that, by having a family support group running and members attending, stigma is being tackled.

**See also:**

[www.prisonersfamilies.org.uk](http://www.prisonersfamilies.org.uk)

Action for Prisoners' Families (2011) *A Guide to Setting up a Support Group*

[www.sfad.org.uk](http://www.sfad.org.uk)

Scottish Families affected by Alcohol and Drugs; *Services Toolkit. A best practice guide to working with family support groups*

[www.familiesoutside.org.uk](http://www.familiesoutside.org.uk)

Families Outside may be able to help by putting family members in touch with each other and recently supported the development of the Inside Out group in Oban.

## Appendix 1 - Members of the Criminal Justice Family Support Network

Aberlour Childcare Trust  
Alcohol Focus Scotland  
Alternatives to Violence Project  
Barnardo's Scotland  
Bridgeton Health Centre  
Caledonia Youth  
Circle  
Cornerstone  
The Croft  
Edinburgh Prison Visitors' Centre  
Families Outside  
Inside Out (Lanarkshire CAB)  
Lighthouse Foundation  
Mothers' Union  
Parkhead CAB  
Perth Prison Support & Advice Centre  
Phoenix Futures  
Place2Be  
Relationships Scotland  
Relationships Scotland, Lanarkshire  
SACRO  
Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs  
Stop It Now  
Theatre Nemo  
VOCAL  
Youth Community Support Association

## Appendix 2 - Helpful Contacts

### Families Outside

Support and Information Helpline – for families of prisoners and those who work with them  
0500 83 93 83

[www.familiesoutside.org.uk](http://www.familiesoutside.org.uk)

### Circle

Family support organisation which has a prison project which works with the prisoner and family - Families Affected by Imprisonment (FABI)

[www.circlescotland.org](http://www.circlescotland.org)

### i-HOP

Barnardo's Information Hub on Offenders families with children for Professionals.

[www.i-hop.org.uk](http://www.i-hop.org.uk)

### Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs

Support Line 08080 10 10 11

[www.sfad.org.uk](http://www.sfad.org.uk)

### The Lighthouse Foundation

Family support for those affected by substance misuse and imprisonment (service covers the Ayrshire regions)

[www.lighthouse-foundation.co.uk](http://www.lighthouse-foundation.co.uk)

### Sacro

Operate transport schemes to some prisons in Scotland

0131 624 7270

[www.sacro.org.uk](http://www.sacro.org.uk)

### Assisted Prison Visits Unit

Help for those on a low income with the costs visiting a prison.

Helpline 0300 063 2100

### Scottish Prison Service

Includes information on individual prisons

[www.sps.gov.uk](http://www.sps.gov.uk)