



TEENAGERS WITH A FAMILY MEMBER IN PRISON

A study on behalf of the Scottish Forum on Prisons and Families¹
(now Families Outside) 2001

This qualitative study highlighted the needs of young people affected by the imprisonment of a family member.

Although the original research aims were to investigate the reluctance of young people to visit prisons, the remit was broadened to include arrest and trial as the early stages of the research showed what a significant impact these processes had on how young people related to the imprisonment itself.

Key Principle :

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (to which UK is signatory)

“Young People can expect to be protected from all forms of punishment and discrimination resulting from the status or activities of other family members and have the right to maintain personal relations and direct contact with an imprisoned parent if they wish to do so and if doing so is not contrary to their own best interests.”

Key themes emerging :

- For young people loss of a family member to imprisonment creates multiple problems.
- The experience of visiting a family member in prison indicates that the needs of young people are largely unrecognized.
- Young people affected by imprisonment are not automatically entitled to support from any agency or department within any statutory service.
- Work needs to be done to increase awareness amongst professional agencies as well as the public about the experiences and needs of these young people.
- It was estimated that around 10,000 children² and young people are affected by the imprisonment of a parent in Scotland. (13,500 estimated 2006)

Key Recommendations :

- Develop links with agencies in the Criminal Justice System, Education and Social Work in order to raise awareness and deliver training to professionals.
- Work with the Scottish Prison Service to improve the experience of young people visiting prison.
- Explore the use of technology to improve contact between young people and their family member in prison.
- Produce information about prison for young people and information to help adults support young people affected by imprisonment

A DVD “It’s No Holiday”- the experiences of young people affected by imprisonment was developed in 2006 and will be utilized in further training and awareness raising

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² More Than a Box of Toys Maureen Buist 1996