

Voicing the needs of families affected by imprisonment

families  
outside



who we are

**Families Outside is the only national charity in Scotland that works solely to support the families of people involved in the criminal justice system.**

We work to mitigate the effects of imprisonment on children and families – and consequently to reduce the likelihood of reoffending – through support and information for families and for the people who work with them.

Why are we here?



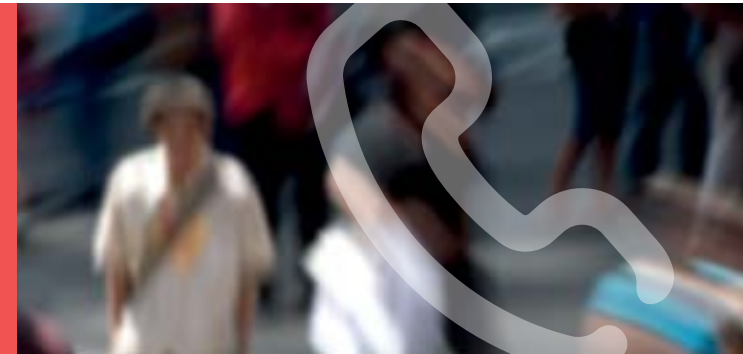
**Imprisonment can be a traumatic experience for families, and its impact is often significant and enduring. This can include:**

- Risk to housing;
- Financial pressures and unemployment;
- Separation from the person in prison and breakdown in family relationships;
- Problems in caring for children and the impact on the estimated 16,500 children who lose a parent to imprisonment each year;
- Anxiety, distress and health problems;
- Rejection, stigma, and victimisation by neighbours and the community.

Families affected by imprisonment face a process of grief and throughout the course of arrest, trial, imprisonment and release. They often have difficulty getting the information and support they need to make them feel in control during periods of crisis and stress.

Families often describe feeling punished along with the offender: **“It’s not just the prisoner who’s being punished - it’s the family as well”**; **“He’s doing the sentence, but I’m paying the price”**; the sense of loss and grief: **“He’s my only son and we’re so close - I don’t know how I’ll manage”**; and the practical difficulties they face: **“He was the breadwinner - how will we manage?”**

How do  
we help?



**Families Outside supports children and families affected by imprisonment through:**

- Families Outside Support & Information Helpline
- Direct support to children and families throughout Scotland
- Bespoke training and awareness-raising
- Development of policy and practice
- Campaigning and research

**Families Outside Support & Information Helpline - 0500 83 93 83**

This is a free confidential telephone Helpline for anyone who has a relative/friend in custody in Scotland and for the professionals who support them.

Support is also available via e-mail and text:

**Email: [support@familiesoutside.org.uk](mailto:support@familiesoutside.org.uk)**

**Text service: text **Famout** followed by your message to **60777****

What we  
can offer  
to families?



**Families Outside supports children and families affected by imprisonment through:**

- Emotional support & a listening ear
- Support with practical issues
- Intervention & follow up
- Knowledge of Criminal Justice System
- Signposting and referral to local & specialised services
- Information and assistance with claiming travel expenses
- Information on prisons/regimes
- Information sheets on issues relevant to families

What we  
can offer to  
professionals?



**Families Outside supports professionals working with families affected by imprisonment through:**

- Training, awareness-raising and sharing of good practice
- Development of policy and practice
- Signposting and referral to local & specialised services
- Information on prisons/regimes
- Information sheets on issues relevant to families
- Research and evaluation

## Key Points

- Prisoners who maintain family ties are up to six times less likely to re-offend <sup>1</sup> and cope better during imprisonment. <sup>2</sup>
- Families can play an important role in helping prisoners through their sentences and in contributing to sentence management and prison regimes. <sup>3</sup>
- Children who have a relative in prison are more vulnerable to later involvement with the criminal justice system. <sup>4</sup>
- Physical symptoms, mental health problems and regressive behaviour such as bed wetting can also begin when a parent is imprisoned. Children of female prisoners are likely to face the additional disruption of multiple care arrangements during their mother's imprisonment. <sup>5</sup>
- For children and young people the period following the arrest is the worst period for them, not least because of the sudden change in circumstances, a sense of powerlessness, lack of information and possible uncertainty in care arrangements.
- **An estimated 16,500 children each year in Scotland are separated from a parent by imprisonment. This means that each year, more children in Scotland experience a parent's imprisonment than a parent's divorce. <sup>6</sup>**
- Children can react badly even after very short periods of separation. <sup>7</sup>
- Children show signs of stress both before and after visits, including sickness, irritability and excessive quietness or over excitement prior to visits, restlessness and argumentative behaviour during visits and sadness or withdrawn behaviour afterwards. Children can get bored during visits, which both prisoners and carers have identified as one of the most difficult aspects of prison visiting. <sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Holt and Miller (1972) "Explorations in Inmate-Family Relationships." California Department of Corrections Research Report 46; Hairston, C. F. (1991) "Family Ties During Imprisonment: Important to Whom and for What?" Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare 18 (1), 87-104; Ministry of Justice and Department for Children, Schools and Families (2008) Reducing re-offending: supporting families, creating better futures - A Framework for improving the local delivery of support for the families of offenders. London: MoJ and DCSF.

<sup>2</sup> Loucks, N. (2004) 'Prison Without Bars': Needs, support, and good practice for work with Prisoners' Families. Dundee and Edinburgh: Tayside Criminal Justice Partnership and Families Outside.

<sup>3</sup> Correctional Service of Canada (1995) 'Offender Treatability' (full issue). Forum 7(2).

<sup>4</sup> Social Exclusion Unit (2002) Reducing Re-Offending by Ex-Prisoners. London: Social Exclusion Unit.

<sup>5</sup> Loucks, N. (2004), op cit.

<sup>6</sup> Families Outside (2009) 'Support and Information for children affected by imprisonment'. In Brief 4. Edinburgh: Families Outside, extrapolated from Scottish Prison Service (2002) Making a Difference. Edinburgh: SPS.

<sup>7</sup> Wolfe, T. (1999) Counting the cost: the social and financial consequences of women's imprisonment: report prepared for the Wedderburn Committee on Women's Imprisonment. London: Prison Reform Trust.

<sup>8</sup> Loucks (2004), op cit.

**"I nearly lost my faith when this happened,  
I didn't think anyone cared...**Without your support**  
**I don't know what I would have done.**  
**Your support was a light in the dark."****

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