

# Strategic planning for support services for children with a parent or close relative in prison

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Social Policy and Administration.48:7, 848-863

## Abstract

*It has long been recognised that children with a parent or close relative in prison are more likely to experience educational difficulties, emotional distress, family breakdown and a substantial reduction in family income (Boswell 2002; Smith et al, 2007; Morgan et al, 2013a; Morgan & Owen 2013). Consequently, children with a parent in prison are more likely to require support from statutory services, especially education and social care. However, statutory support for this group of children is sparse and children of prisoners tend not to be identified as a priority group. The demand on local authorities to spend their limited budgets wisely means tough decisions have to be made. These decisions are not taken in a vacuum: they are taken in a context of local need, consumer representation, central and local politics; underpinned by the values and attitudes of individual members as well as by the ethos or culture of the local authority itself. In this paper we apply Axford's typology (2009) of the different cultures that underpin local authority service provision to data from a research study carried out in 2011 in one local authority that explored support provision in schools for children of prisoners. We examine the contradictions and gaps within the local authority's attempts to synergise the different modules of service delivery into a coherent pattern of provision and we explore how changes in strategic culture might lead to improvements being made in terms of service delivery to this group of 'vulnerable' children.*

**Key words;** children of prisoners; social policy; local authority; strategic planning; welfare provision

## Introduction

It is estimated that approximately 200,000 children had a parent in prison in England and Wales in 2009 (Williams et al 2012); six times the number of those involved in safeguarding (SCIE 2008; DCSF/Ministry of Justice 2007). It has been established that children who experience the imprisonment of a parent or close relative are less likely to meet child well-being indicators (Scharff-Smith & Gampell 2011; Murray 2007; Williams et al 2012) as well as being more likely to face a series of negative experiences and outcomes such as an increase in poverty; stigmatisation; poor school attendance and bullying (Boswell 2002; Loureiro 2010). Thus, it seems imperative that children with a parent or close relative in prison receive effective support from their local authority to overcome any difficulties they might experience and to have the same opportunities as other children. Yet, despite this weight of evidence, it has been established that statutory provision for this group of children is often patchy with children with a parent or close relative in prison being identified as a low strategic priority (Glover 2009):

‘Local authorities have no picture of demand in their area, and support nationally is patchy and fragmented’ (Ministry of Justice/DCSF, 2009, p.24)

As a result, many children with a parent or close relative in prison will receive little support or even be known to their local authority (Social Exclusion Task Force 2007). Furthermore, it is apparent that when support is offered, this tends to be focused on those children and young people considered to be at risk in terms of either extremely poor educational outcomes or serious child protection issues. Consequently there is a lack of appreciation of the complexity of the circumstances that many children with a parent or close relative in prison find themselves in (Ministry of Justice/DCSF, 2009). It has been established that the best way for children with a parent or close relative in prison to have their needs met is through a multi – agency co-ordinated response between Children’s Services, Criminal Justice and Health Services (DCSF/Ministry of Justice 2007; Ministry of Justice/DCSF, 2009; SCIE 2008:11). As this level of coordination seldom happens; the lack of strategy and provision at local authority level has led to children with a parent or close relative in

prison being called the ‘forgotten victims’ of the criminal justice system (Shaw 1992; Murray 2005; Marshall 2008).

Developing local social policy around strategic service planning and provision is an extremely complex task requiring substantial negotiation with a diverse number of communities who all have their own needs and expectations (Taylor-Gooby, 2012). Strategic planning in a time of austerity is even more complex with the overriding focus on eligibility thresholds, outcomes and value for money. It is therefore useful to debate the context of political pressure that impacts upon all local authorities in their efforts to provide services for children with a parent or close relative in prison before studying the strategic planning in one local authority using Axford’s typology (2009). The data used in this paper is from research conducted in 2011 which explored the support available through schools for children with a father in prison in one geographical area. The original research sought to quantify current provision and identify suggestions as to what support strategies could be strengthened or developed and we established a number of key issues relating to the on-going support needs of children with a father or other close relative in prison (Morgan et al, 2013a; Morgan et al, 2013b). Through interviews with stakeholders including strategic partners, children and families, it was apparent that the attitudes and beliefs of those responsible for developing local strategies were axiomatic as to which services were ultimately provided. Thus, Axford’s typology (outlined below) proves vital to help develop an understanding of what was happening within local authority strategic decision making and how even small shifts in perspective might make a difference to the planning that took place and any subsequent service provision for children with a parent or close relative in prison. In the following sections we explore the service provision of one local authority and, through the application of Axford’s typology, discuss what may be discerned as to their policy drivers and the implications therein for children with a parent or close relative in prison.

### **Commentary on politics of general welfare service provision**

All welfare services have a statutory underpinning, are inspected against a series of criteria and are expected by governments to deliver certain outcomes and achieve certain standards. Thus, the broader environment of social policy, political decision making and social expectation are important to recognise when asking questions as to what services are being provided for children with a parent or close relative in prison as a distinct client group. What can be seen is that the current economic climate together with the political ideologies of the previous and present governments have led to a substantial squeeze on existing services for all children as well as a reluctance to invest in what is already available or any new initiatives for targeted groups. The investments made by New Labour to support every family and child had a strong emphasis on education as the key to tackling poverty and lack of opportunity which, whilst laudable, had the effect of marginalising or excluding those who did not or were not able to participate in that agenda (Williams, 2005). The current landscape appears to have the same emphasis on education, but within an anti-welfare narrative that encourages a shift and reformation in service provision towards self-reliance (Mooney and Neal, 2010; Jacobs and Manzi, 2012). Coupled with this there has also been a significant move towards business models of practice with the clearly articulated priority of saving money and protecting budgets (Sellick, 2006). These models of practice have been further encouraged by an externally enforced framework of targets; inspection regimes, performance assessment and market style contracts which fail to recognise the diversity of service users, instead promoting the development of homogenous, limited provision and constrictive eligibility criteria (Dickens, 2007). Added to this has been the steady growth of the involvement of the charity and private sector in the field of welfare provision which has had a mixed reception with evidence of both improved practice and substantial failings (Campbell-Barr, 2009; Park and Wilding, 2013). Furthermore, since the 1990's and the infamous White Paper 'Caring for People' (1989) there has been a dominant discourse that welfare services should provide choice for its consumers which adds a further layer of complexity with the assumption that all have the capacity to make choices as well as assuming that those in need of support are open to intervention and willing to engage (Clarke et al, 2005). Hence, the complex web of services that are available and the changing ownership of service provision create confusion and

repetition as well as a lack of creativity, flexibility and communication (Light and Campbell, 2007; Stradling and Alexander, 2012) resulting in a frequently unstable landscape.

Thus, marginalised groups such as the families of offenders are at risk of not receiving the specific attention and transitional arrangements needed to sustain and co-ordinate existing successful services as well as create new ones (Craig and Taylor, 2002). As a result, Percy-Smith and Dalrymple (conference presentation, 2012) highlight the gap between 'the rhetoric of statutory obligations/service provision and the lived realities and experiences of children and families' (). The lived reality for children with a parent or close relative in prison is that they are 'forgotten victims' (Gill, 2009) with no explicit statutory responsibility identified for the provision of bespoke services.

### **Axford's typology**

For governments and local authorities, trying to meet the requirements of all children and families within society, especially when budgets are tightly controlled can be difficult. It is inevitable, therefore, that considerable tensions will be felt that could be ameliorated through the identification of the underpinning rationales; belief systems or frameworks for decision making and prioritisation with a subsequent attempt to debate their efficacy and seek possible alternatives to improve decision making. Thus, an argument as to why certain services are provided and where local authorities place their priorities might be clearly made to the population at large. To this end, Axford (2009) has developed a framework using five concepts of children's wellbeing that he feels sheds light on and thus aids our understanding of the drivers that underpin local welfare policy and strategy making (see table 1). Axford emphasises that the five concepts are not mutually exclusive; they connect and overlap and any agency or local authority is likely to use a mixture of these concepts to inform their service planning and delivery. The first is concerned with meeting children's needs with the belief that children's health and wellbeing either is or will be seriously impaired if services are not provided. Axford suggests that policies and services with a needs led basis will be based on outcomes evidence

and will have a high concentration on risk and protection, whilst also seeking to create a service package that is bespoke to the individual situation. His second is rights based, ensuring that services meet legal frameworks requiring that an individual's rights are upheld. The suggestion is that service policies based on this are likely to be about quantity rather than quality with a high regard for compliance and global application – a one size fits all series of services with the involvement of service users in creating them. Thirdly, Axford identifies tackling poverty based on the concept of access to material resources. Here, services will concentrate on maximising income; improving employment opportunities and thus having a high regard for education and compliance of the individual in taking some responsibilities for their circumstances. Fourth is a quality of life framework that places a high emphasis on quality relationships; not just between people; but between people and their environment as well as seeking effective services for mental and physical wellbeing. Lastly, Axford identifies inclusion and the need to tackle social exclusion with a focus on integration into social systems through education, work and social opportunities. All of these models are highly laudable and should be acknowledged as beneficial in terms of their applicability and efficacy and very few would disagree with a local authority that sets out a clear service delivery stance based on one or more of them. However, whilst this may be the case, it may also be desirable for a local authority to use a combination of them adding texture and richness to the services that are provided. However, Axford identifies that there are many contradictions between the different approaches within the framework and strategy makers should pay close attention to where they are not closely linked and seek resolution to the identified conflicts that emerge. For example, Axford draws attention to the tension between needs led and rights based approaches, where a needs led approach would be over concerned with identifying risk and would therefore be unlikely to intervene in a situation where a child is smacked on one occasion by his/her parent. A rights based approach would be concerned that the rights of the child had been violated, that a failure to act is negligent and therefore an intervention should take place. Table one looks at Axford's typology and identifies the characteristics of each concept along with its assets and drawbacks. We have deliberately used the terms asset and drawback rather than strength and weakness

or positive and negative as, as Axford says, this is not a search for which one is right or most appropriate; it is an effort to understand their implications and applicability. The richness of Axford's typology lies in their blending; seeking to construct or design policies and strategies that achieve synergy or provide complementary services and are targeted effectively at those who need help and support.

**Table 1: Service delivery models based on each concept of child well-being (Axford, 2009) collated by the authors**

Concept	Characteristics of application to service provision	Assets	Drawbacks	Commentary
Meeting needs	Focus on outcome of healthy development	Providing services for children and families assessed as in need	Sees family as passive and grateful recipients of service	Whilst heralded as step forward from service led provision, needs led still assumes expert knows best and there are still issues of availability of appropriate services
Upholding rights	Ensuring services comply with legislation that demands respect for children's rights	Seeks to privilege children's voices and work with them and their families	Involving children in decision making when they are not supported sufficiently	Compliance is privileged over relationships. Regulation and Inspection systems proliferate
Tackling poverty	Seeking to return people to work or to reduce family expenditure	Improves life outcomes and opportunities	Forced into unrewarding jobs. Made to go without to balance family budgets	Risk of social exclusion and family breakdown
Quality of life	Objective consideration of wellbeing of environment	Quality of implementation	Encourages risk averse decision making. Returning child home to poor situation vs family ties	Dilemmas are considerable here as a balance of different quality of life measures is hard to achieve
	Subjective consideration of mental health			
Combating social exclusion	Sustaining social ties	Seeks to keep children within their communities and having strong contact with extended families, institutions like school, peers and mentors	Intervention may exacerbate problem as social inclusion may also cause problems	Coercive nature of many policies to tackle social exclusion lead many to be deeply suspicious of interventions



## **Data collection methodology**

The data used in this paper was collected as part of a research project undertaken in 2011 which looked at support provision in schools for children whose father was in prison in one local authority in the South West of England. We focused on the role of schools in supporting children of prisoners because schools have been identified as having a critical role in supporting this group of children (SCIE 2008) and yet there was very little research on this area. Between January and July 2011, a number of semi-structured interviews were carried out with ten stakeholders from agencies such as Probation; Youth Work; Educational Psychology; Local Authority Children Services; Youth Offending Teams; Education Welfare as well as local and national charities involved in caring for children with a parent in prison. As well as stakeholders, we also interviewed ten head teachers, six children/young people and their mothers (Morgan et al, 2013a). In addition, a focus group was organised with three school nurses using the interview schedule for stakeholders to direct the discussion. The six families, who took part in the interviews, were recruited via advertisements at the local prisons and relevant charity groups on an opt-in basis. The children, who took part in the interviews, were aged 8–13 years old: three boys and three girls. There were additional children within the 6 families but consent was either not given by the child themselves or the mother felt that the child was too young to take part in the interview and hence did not give her consent for the child to take part in the interviews.

As well as semi-structured interviews, questionnaires were sent to seventy-five schools (primary, secondary, independent, pupil referral unit and special schools) in the local authority with a covering letter explaining the purpose of the research. The questionnaires could be completed online or returned in a free-post envelope and were anonymous. Questions were asked about how many children in their school had a parent in prison; their views on support which was offered and what services they provided or wished to provide. A total of nineteen questionnaires were returned with the majority having been completed by either the Head Teacher or

Deputy Head. Other members of staff who completed the questionnaires were Parent Support Advisors, Head of Teaching and Learning, Teachers and Head of Health and Safeguarding. We did not specify who should complete the questionnaire and it was left to the discretion of the school. As much as possible we tried to ensure that the schools who took part in the interviews were not the same schools that completed the questionnaires and the head-teacher was asked on the phone when booking the interview whether they had completed the questionnaire.

Full ethical approval was obtained from the University and, in line with our ethics, the purpose of the interviews was fully explained to the participants before they took place with each participant being given a copy of an information sheet detailing the research aims and objectives and their role in the process. As children's rights were at the forefront of this research, only children who gave consent themselves took part in the research (Leeson, 2007). We arranged support for any participant in the research who felt that they needed it and this was taken up by one child.

Once all the data was collected, thematic data analysis was used to identify emerging and recurrent themes (Silverman 2006; Bryman 2012). Looking at the data collected from the stakeholders, four key themes emerge:

1. Lack of awareness about this group of children
2. Lack of far-reaching strategic drivers
3. Lack of funding
4. Lack of information sharing

It became evident that these themes were firmly based in a broader context of welfare provision than just that offered by schools. Schools were dependent on services provided by Children's Services; probation and charity/voluntary groups to support the families they worked with, thus indicating that the data collected provided relevant commentary on the wider landscape of welfare services for children with a parent or close relative in prison. In the following section we link the above four themes with Axford's typology (2011), we shall debate each in turn, using views from the children and their mothers with responses from practitioners and

other stakeholders, before arguing their significance in informing key recommendations for all local and national strategic planning for children with a father in prison. Although the research was undertaken with children with a father in prison, we would submit that similar arguments pertain to children whose mother, grandparent or siblings are in prison whilst recognising the qualitative differences in the lived experience of these relationships.

### **Applying Axford's typology to data and key findings**

#### *Lack of awareness about this group of children*

It was clear from the data that schools and local authority policymakers were unaware of the existence of this group of children unless, as individuals, they came to their notice through established systems monitoring school attendance; behavioural problems or issues of child protection or safeguarding. The impact of this lack of awareness, on the part of local authority policymakers, was a failure to provide appropriate services that focus fully on the dynamics of the child's situation and the interplay of the many factors and issues therein, such as their anxiety for their parents and siblings; their experience of social isolation within their communities or their inability to discuss their situation with friends, neighbours or relatives for fear of discrimination or rejection:

‘When I was in reception, year 1,2,3 and 4 I had no friends, I kept on running away and bullying people’ (Child aged 9).

The majority of the children we interviewed were coping (just about) with the difficulties they were experiencing, but would have welcomed some support or acknowledgment from their school or other services. A number of children reported that their siblings had become unruly at school as a consequence of their social isolation. Coming to the attention of the authority and thus being provided with supportive services before this point would undoubtedly have lessened their struggle and reduced their risk of developing a cycle of poor school attendance and consequent poor educational outcomes (Marshall 2008; Glover 2009; Morgan et al, 2013a).

On an individual basis some of the head teachers seemed to be aware of the problems the children faced and empathised, but a lack of policy direction and therefore resources meant they were often unable to do little more than note it:

'I feel it's very important to know that a child's parent is in prison and it's wrong that it's not known. As far as I'm aware the education welfare system has a form, you can actually get more detail about a child but that's only in certain circumstances where the child is known and is affected by whatever the crime was. But we don't even get that information until 1 month after it's happened which again can be a problem. The other problem we have is, if children are absent because they're visiting parents in prison sometimes we don't know, but even if we do know there's no code for visiting prison. It has to go under a Code C which is only 'other circumstances'. So it's still an absence of a type. There's no system to inform us, there should be something just to support the child' (Head teacher).

A lack of awareness of this group of children at strategic level would seem to suggest a flawed framework of vulnerability with little or no recognition of the diverse, complex nature of individual and family needs. A close analysis of the data through an application of Axford's typology showed a decision making process focussing on a narrow consideration of responsibility for service delivery; centred on education (tackling poverty) and child protection (meeting needs). Similarly, there were assumptions as to the capacity of children and their families to voice their own need for assistance that failed to recognise the fear of stigmatisation that made asking for help and support unlikely:

'I think a lot of parents might feel a bit embarrassed or a bit ashamed to come and ask, or just to come and inform maybe' (Head teacher).

It is argued that families and individuals who are unaware of how deeply they are traumatised or who have a strong desire to keep their difficulties hidden either through shame or pride will not seek help or, if help is offered, will be, initially at least, unresponsive (Clarke et al, 2005). As a consequence, a failure to acknowledge the existence of a large, diverse group of children and families means that policies that promote an active process of encouraging disclosure of difficulties as well as

requests for a varied range of services offering help and understanding are unlikely to be developed.

### *Lack of far-reaching strategic drivers*

The expectations from central Government are crucial here as without an unequivocal directive from central Government, service provision will always be patchy. Currently, the discourse of central government has concentrated on tackling poverty and combatting social exclusion, using the strategies developed by the previous administration. Using Axford's typology we can clearly see that returning people to work and sustaining social ties are key aspects of policies in these areas. Both of which are laudable aims that would help children with a parent in prison by improving life outcomes as well as supporting children to have nourishing, on-going contact with families and friends. However, our data showed that, in particular, the national driver of sustaining social ties did not feature strongly in this local authority. One family interviewed had to move away from their community because of the attitudes towards the crime committed. They did not receive any help to maintain links with the school and supportive social networks or with establishing a new life in their new community.

The families we interviewed also cited the difficulties of maintaining contact with their father in prison:

'Visiting times could be better as school gets cross if I miss school and I miss my dad and I often don't see him during term time' (Child aged 10).

'The school could be more understanding when I am taking the children out of school for visiting. I only did it once, but I was made to feel bad for doing it' (Mother).

'I have taken the children out of school and let them go half a day, take them out and I even got phoned up for that. So I was like 'I'm sorry but they've got to go and see their dad' and that's when I stopped it then. I thought I can't keep taking them out of school' (Mother).

Families either had to be subversive and run the risk of facing criticism or possible punitive sanctions by failing to regularly attend school or relinquish frequent contact, settling for less meaningful means of contact through letters or phone calls. This lack of sensitivity and understanding leading to a loss of contact meant that many of the children experienced great distress in terms of missing a key relationship and a raised state of anxiety as to their father's wellbeing in prison that they could not easily establish as they could not see them. We also found children were anxious about their fathers return after several years away and what the implications might be:

'I was coming home and mum told us. And B and I started to argue and I threw a tantrum – I was really upset' (Child aged 12 talking about her father's imminent return).

Furthermore, financial hardship was seen by the children and their mothers as an overriding stress factor and the lack of help to manage finances and seek effective advice with regards to benefits and entitlements was perceived as a pressure they could do without. Axford sees a significant risk of social exclusion and family breakdown if poverty is not tackled effectively and our interviews suggest that this was a real experience for many:

'I had to work full-time and put my children into childcare. It was a struggle' (Mother).

'My mum used to come round with bags of groceries for us every week as we had no money. It was humiliating and added to the stress' (Mother).

Again, schools are aware of the financial pressures on families and many would like to help if they can;

'...having a parent in prison, the financial effect on the child it can be down to things like, can affect things like their school uniform, the money they get for trips, they might not be able to go on trips, even things like bus fare, and their lunch. If the school is informed about these things we can help in those areas. We do have funds that do help children so we can do something about that. But if we don't know, the child

may be continually asked about certain things which puts them in a difficult situation' (Head teacher).

Therefore a lack of equality between different strategic drivers can have serious consequences and we would suggest that a good first step would be to ensure that children with a parent or close relative in prison feature in the Children Services Children and Young Persons Plans that every local authority has to provide.

### *Lack of funding*

A lack of political drivers and/or political will frequently means an absence of money or other resource to support welfare initiatives. The reverse is also true; the availability of funding can help create drivers for the development of services. The current austerity measures means that only those with a strong heritage of socially recognised and/or politically acknowledged need will secure or keep financial support. We identified in our research that there was a common issue concerning wellbeing and the mental health of children with a parent in prison:

'I would get upset – some songs would make me cry – Run by Snow Patrol and what about .... by Westlife and the school song – I would hear them and I would cry and get upset a lot. I also felt sick' (Child aged 9).

'He finds it hard to talk about his feelings, he is very sensitive' (Mother talking about 17 year old child).

Practitioners also find it hard to understand why there is not a wider, more inclusive or targeted provision for children with a parent in prison:

'We had a massive push, recently this last year and a half; they've run a project to try and breakdown that stigma of mental health, especially in schools with the family. So lots of input. I don't see why they can't have that on a certain level with people that are in prison' (Head Teacher).

'The support these children should get is exactly the same as every other child, no different from any other child. Every child matters. The guardian angel in the corner should be there for every child. One of the things that I think is really difficult is the listings in newspapers where their neighbours, their peers etc. can see the details of a crime and that can be very, very hard on the child. We need additional services, we need to draw on external sites, things like Connections, Youth Offending, Parent Support, but there's no funding. We need training and we need knowledge' (Head Teacher).

According to Axford, a quality of life framework for service delivery has a considerable number of dilemmas that are hard to resolve. We suspect that the difficulties in securing effective measures of quality of life means that this is not a framework that this local authority feels entirely comfortable with and therefore, despite the existence of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) teams and school counselling, the level of investment is minimal meaning that access is only for those with florid symptoms as identified above rather than those who are suffering quietly, just about managing to hold things together. Furthermore, a service delivery model that upholds children's rights is unlikely to succeed in the current economic situation as it requires significant financial investment in terms of training, support mechanisms and resources, especially for younger children who are least likely to feel their voice is being listened to. When considering children with a parent in prison, some of their choices are not available; having dad at home; being able to see him more often in warm, nourishing surroundings. Consequently children require help to explore the emotions behind the choices they might wish to make. Clarke *et al* (2005) argue for a concentration on voice rather than choice; that people should feel empowered to work with service providers to gain access to the services they require, whether they are aware of their need or not. Percy-Smith and Dalrymple (2012) argue that we should ask about how valued people feel they are rather than do they have a voice; that the relationship between service provider and user is critical:



'I don't like my class knowing as they don't understand and asked lots of questions that were hard to answer. One teacher didn't know and got the class doing a project on prisons which was really upsetting. Our teaching assistant is good – she notices when I'm sad and gives me a hug (Child aged 8).

The financial investment required to develop relationships that facilitate empowerment is unlikely to be made unless the combined service delivery model of combating social exclusion, meeting need and tackling poverty identify that this is the way to achieve the aims of the Local Authority. At the moment this is doubtful because of the costs involved. A policy making framework that sees the expert knowing better in terms of meeting needs combined with the coercive capacity of an agenda to combat social exclusion would seem to further make it unlikely that energy will be given to hearing the voices of the children and young people experiencing a parent's imprisonment.

#### *Lack of information sharing*

The final key finding was the evidence of a lack of information sharing that prevented a co-ordinated approach to being aware of who might be experiencing a parent's imprisonment and may be in need of supportive services:

'School has lots of supply teachers and they do not know and are not kept informed of the situation' (Mother).

'I went to xxxxxx Family Information Service and made lots of self-referrals through connexions, my GP, to CAMHS. The police child protection people said that as the children weren't victims themselves they couldn't get any support' (Mother).

Effective information sharing structures alongside the identification of clear roles and responsibilities for this group of children are important to develop strategic awareness and create a drive for services that are responsive and efficient;

'I suppose there isn't really a requirement to know.....I think it would be a good idea for the school to know is so that if there was support needed for the child we could offer the support to the child. But if we don't know we can't offer that support' (Head-Teacher).

'There's no system to inform us, there should be something just to support the child. There's so much stress on the child and on the remaining family.....But however there is no onus on the family to inform the school. Personally I think there should be something like a letter from either the court services or the police services that goes to the education department who filters information down to a relevant person in the school just so the school is informed and the child can be, you know keep an eye on the child' (Head-Teacher).

A focus on meeting needs that concentrates on safeguarding is not going to actively share information on families that are just coping and therefore not yet under the spotlight of welfare services:

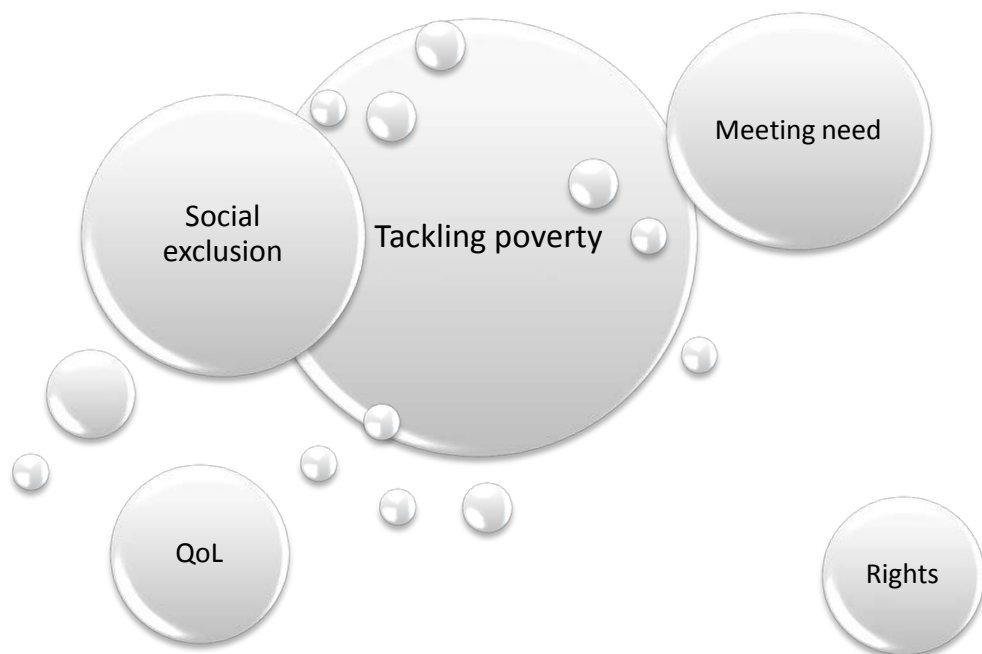
'Outside of the safeguarding bubble there isn't a lot of information exchanged between education and probation' (Probation Officer).

A concentration on tackling poverty and combatting social exclusion runs the risk of failing to regard families holistically and acknowledge the serious quality of life issues that proliferate for this group of children. They are often engaged in substantial caring responsibilities within the home as well as emotionally worrying and thinking about the wellbeing of their parent in prison. If their friends do not know their circumstances then they are often in a position of keeping secrets, of lying as to the whereabouts of a missing parent and the financial burden of travelling to visit their parent in prison means they are often excluded from the accepted aspects of children's lives such as pocket money, treats and holidays. What we can see is that quality of life issues are viewed through a lens of social exclusion with little recognition of its multi-faceted nature meaning that a more holistic interpretation of information sharing does not occur and is unlikely to do so unless there are causes

for concern that fit the narrow band of behaviour, achievement or safeguarding. Furthermore, upholding rights seem to be restricted to the rigid application of regulation and inspection regimes that questions attendance, achievement and safety, but do not look at happiness, relaxation or escape from the emotionally and cognitively confusing landscape of having a parent in prison.

## Conclusion

**Figure 2: The landscape of service delivery in one Local Authority**



Axford's typology has been of considerable use to us in exploring the data obtained from children, parents, teachers and other stakeholders and identifying the impact of national policy drivers upon the provision of welfare services within schools for families with a parent in prison. It has enabled us to begin to discern the

contradictions and gaps as well as explore the attempts of one local authority to synergise the different models of service delivery into a coherent pattern of provision. What we have discovered is that there is a high concentration on tackling poverty with a smaller, but significant focus on social exclusion which is not surprising given the national policy drivers towards reducing the welfare bill and confronting patterns of crime and anti-social behaviour that are associated with social exclusion. A 'meeting need' model of service delivery is present, but we would argue that its existence is limited to supporting the priorities of tackling poverty and social exclusion as well as being a top down construction that privileges the opinion of the expert and does not hear the voice of the family or the child. Thus, as we show in figure one; there is minimal recognition of quality of life and even less recognition of upholding rights. In order for children with a parent in prison to receive the services they would like, there should be greater synergy between all of these models (figure 2) and we would argue that the development of service provision and delivery should take place using the widest possible lens of upholding children's rights through listening to their perspective and supporting them in what they wish to achieve for themselves and their family. Furthermore a good welfare system for children with a parent in prison should embrace the multi-faceted nature of quality of life and put this at the centre. Combating social exclusion, tackling poverty and meeting needs would naturally follow from this shift in stance as children and their families would feel respected, listened to and thereby empowered to ask for help or develop their own support mechanisms within a non-stigmatising community.

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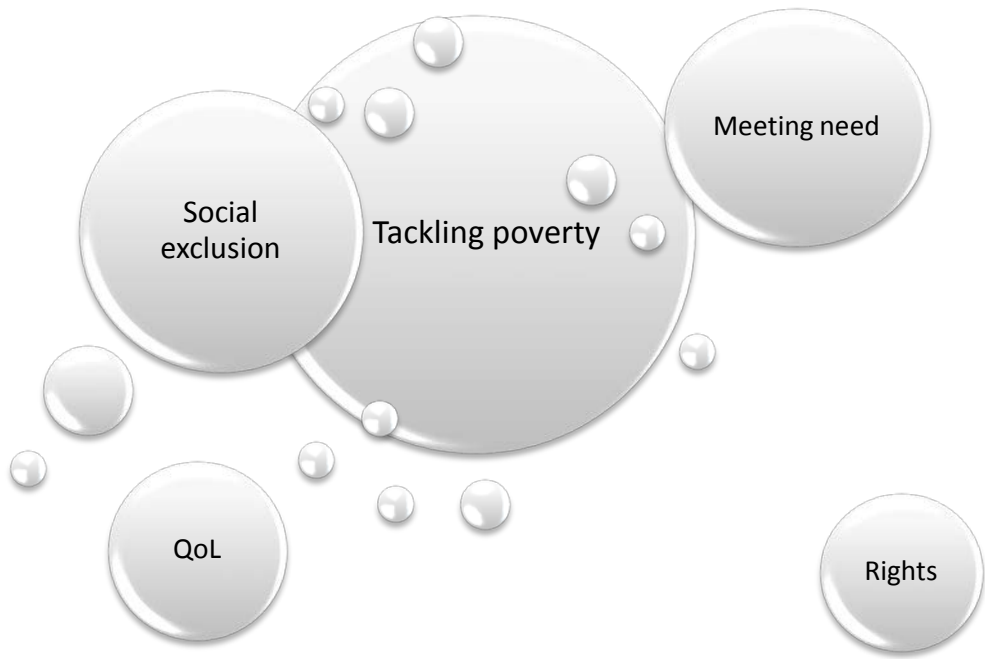
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<b>Concept</b>	<b>Characteristics of application to service provision</b>	<b>Assets</b>	<b>Drawbacks</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
Meeting needs	Focus on outcome of healthy development	Providing services for children and families assessed as in need	Sees family as passive and grateful recipients of service	Whilst heralded as step forward from service led provision, needs led still assumes expert knows best and there are still issues of availability of appropriate services
Upholding rights	Ensuring services comply with legislation that demands respect for children's rights	Seeks to privilege children's voices and work with them and their families	Involving children in decision making when they are not supported sufficiently	Compliance is privileged over relationships. Regulation and Inspection systems proliferate
Tackling poverty	Seeking to return people to work or to reduce family expenditure	Improves life outcomes and opportunities	Forced into unrewarding jobs. Made to go without to balance family budgets	Risk of social exclusion and family breakdown
Quality of life	Objective consideration of wellbeing of environment	Quality of implementation	Encourages risk averse decision making. Returning child home to poor situation vs family ties	Dilemmas are considerable here as a balance of different quality of life measures is hard to achieve
	Subjective consideration of mental health			
Combating social exclusion	Sustaining social ties	Seeks to keep children within their communities and having strong contact with extended families, institutions like school, peers and mentors	Intervention may exacerbate problem as social inclusion may also cause problems	Coercive nature of many policies to tackle social exclusion lead many to be deeply suspicious of interventions

Table 1





**Figure 1**

**Figure 2**

