



## Supporting Young Parents in Prison Summary of Evaluation Findings

### Project Summary

The Supporting Young Fathers in Prison (SYFP) project is delivered by Pact in Public Sector prisons across Wales. The project advocates on behalf of young fathers in prison and their families. It brokers relevant services, provides therapeutic support, facilitates parenting efficacy, supports efforts to build relationships, and strengthens family ties.

Pact deliver this service through its prison-based Family Engagement Service, and in collaboration with services within the prison and the wider community. Volunteers, Family Engagement Managers, and Family Engagement Workers offer one-to-one casework support to the men in prison and their families, refer them to relevant services, deliver parenting programmes, relationship courses and other related courses, help the men maintain contact with family members by organising extra prison visits in family-friendly settings, and provide additional services to enhance the quality and outcome of prison visits for the men and their families.

### Project Outcomes

The stated outcomes of the project are:

- Young parents affected by imprisonment are less socially isolated through engagement with peer support and identification of appropriate support mechanisms.
- Young parents in the prison and in the community, receive individualised support and co-ordinated interventions through specific assessments and family-agreed plans.
- Families have improved their parenting skills, leading to improved outcomes for children, reduction in reoffending and successful resettlement into the community.
- Practitioners and policy makers are better informed about the specific needs of young parents affected by imprisonment and consider their needs in the development of future policy and practice.

### Key Figures

Up to July 2017, the project had assessed 2716 men in custody. Of this number, 1011 (37%) received intensive casework support, guided by family action plans which were agreed between the father in custody and parent/carer in the community. 1300 young parents (48%) attended courses and groups to improve knowledge and parenting skills. 1085 families (40%) were linked to services in the community which provided relevant support. Examples of these services are 'Dads Can', Atal Y Fro, local TAF services, drug projects, Action for Children and Barnardo's services. 276 families (10%) received intensive resettlement support guided by specific resettlement plans, involving resettlement conferencing and support from volunteer mentors who provided assistance with attending appointments, prison visits, talking to children about their father's imprisonment and engaging with

local schools. A pilot of a domestic abuse perpetrator course was delivered and three national conferences were held. Workshops for those working with families affected by imprisonment were held, including working with families where sexual offenses have been committed, Hidden Sentence, Bridging the Wall, 'Telling the Children', reflective practice workshops and networking events and forums.

### **Headline Findings**

- The SYFP project broadens participation by disseminating information about the service in prison wings through volunteers, workers, peer mentors and others delivering the service, and also by displaying information flyers and hosting promotional activities.
- The SYFP project delivers its aim of improving the levels and quality of contact between men and prison and their families by organising extra prison visits in more conducive settings. This is the provision the men and their families access the most.
- Men in prison believe that the SYFP project improves the frequency of contact and quality of relationships with their families and strengthens the bonds between them. It also improves their parenting ability, emotional wellbeing and behaviour.
- Staff and volunteers delivering the SYFP project provide extensive advocacy services. For example, they liaise with social services, visit schools to advocate on behalf of children affected by parental imprisonment.
- The service provides individualised support that is tailored to suit the needs of each parent in prison and his family. This approach is consistent with research which suggests that service users are more likely to engage with, and benefit from individualised services.
- Additional support provided by the project include brokering social welfare support for prisoners and their families. The extant international literature on evidence-based practice and key models of rehabilitation strongly emphasize that brokering access to relevant services can aid the desistance process.
- The project is desistance-focused; its role in strengthening bonds between prisoners and their families can encourage desistance. The desistance research literature emphasises that bonds with non-criminogenic family members promote desistance.
- The project provides opportunities for prisoners and their families to maintain ties and relationships. In doing so, the service aligns itself with research which emphasizes the role of families in supporting resettlement.
- The consensus amongst all those who participated in this evaluation is that Supporting Young Parents in Prison project is an indispensable service and no other agency in the three participating prisons provides similar family support services.

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The full report is available from [www.prisonadvice.org.uk](http://www.prisonadvice.org.uk)