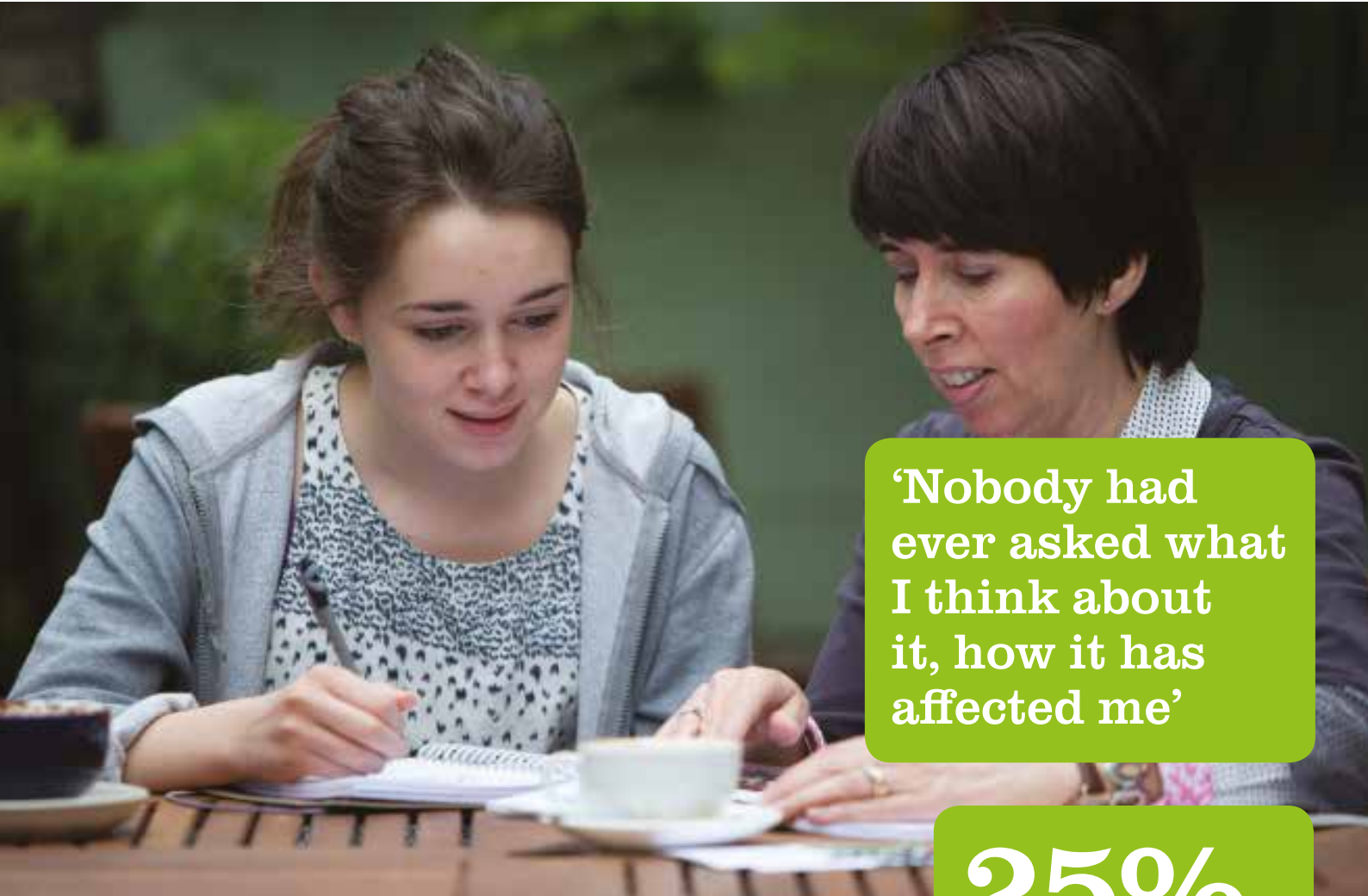


NICCO: Assisting apprenticeship providers to support children of offenders



‘Nobody had ever asked what I think about it, how it has affected me’

25%

of children with a parent in prison are at risk of poor mental health

Find out how to support offenders’ children and their families

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Who are we?

The National Information Centre on Children of Offenders – NICCO (formerly i-HOP) is a service that supports professionals to work effectively with offenders' children and families. NICCO collates and promotes examples of services, interventions, resources, policy and research around this vulnerable group.

Barnardo's was originally commissioned by the **Department for Education** in 2013 to develop this service as an online information hub with a focus on England (www.nicco.org.uk). The service is targeted at all professionals who come into contact with offenders' children and their families, from various sectors including education, health and social care as well as the criminal justice system.

NICCO: Assisting Apprenticeship providers to support children of offenders

“My Dad is in prison for drug dealing. He got a 12 year prison sentence. I am 17 and I never knew he did this sort of thing.”

Young person, 17 years¹

It is estimated that there are 200,000 children a year that experience the imprisonment of a parent.² Currently there are no routine identification processes in place that systematically identify who these children are and what support they might need. There is therefore, no way of telling exactly how many children and young people are affected.

Young people affected by parental imprisonment and apprenticeship providers

“I think what didn’t help was it being in the paper. Everyone knows that he’s in prison, but they didn’t need to know what for...in a way that’s punishing us as well.”

Young person, 17 years³

- **Health Issues:** 25% of prisoners’ children are at higher risk of poor mental health.⁴ Offenders’ children are also at an increased likelihood of experiencing poverty compared to their peers.⁵
- **Inter-generational offending:** Research has shown that 65% of boys under 10 years old with a father in prison went on to offend.⁶

Behavioural changes often common to young people, such as challenging behaviour and becoming difficult to engage with, can result in young people rejecting support or becoming more isolated. This can be particularly pertinent for young people with a parent in prison. For example, they may be experiencing particular pressures such as the need to ‘stay strong’, whilst also facing feelings of abandonment and stigma.⁷ This, along with a fear of judgement or information being passed on, can mean that young people do not seek help or let professionals know when a parent goes to prison.

“Someone should ask me what it is like for me. Nobody had ever asked what I think about it, how it has affected me, not until now.”

Young person, 16 years⁸



Given the experiences young people with a parent in prison may face, it is essential that apprenticeship providers understand and are able to respond to their needs. Recent changes in legislation, such as the requirement for young people to stay in education until they are aged 18 and government aims to create 3 million new apprenticeships, mean that more young people will be accessing apprenticeship opportunities.

Apprenticeship providers are ideally placed to identify young people aged 16-18 who have a parent or close family member in prison, and ensure they are aware of the support and resources available. Given their work with young people who may be leaving full time education settings for the first time, apprenticeship providers are well-positioned to support young people who may be experiencing feelings of vulnerability or isolation. Their role in safeguarding and assisting young people to overcome barriers to achievement is particularly important for those young people affected by imprisonment. Having access to targeted support may also result in higher levels of engagement and completion of placements.

How can NICCO support apprenticeship providers?

In response to the need for professionals to have an awareness and ability to support these young people, the Department for Education commissioned this project in 2013 and again in 2015.

NICCO is a national one stop information and advice service for all professionals working with families of offenders. It brings together information that can support these professionals to signpost and support young people affected by imprisonment, including:

- Details of local and national services that work specifically with young people affected by parental offending
- Resources that professionals can use to work with young people
- Existing strategies and research that highlight the importance of supporting families and young people
- Details of training and awareness courses for professional organisations and their colleagues
- Resources and information for young people themselves

NICCO recognises that many apprenticeship providers work in a busy environment with demands on their time. NICCO puts all the resources in one place so help and information is there when it's needed.

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