

NICCO: Assisting Community Rehabilitation Companies and the National Probation Service to support offenders' children



“It’s not just the prisoner that’s punished is it? It’s the whole family.”

65%
of boys with a parent in prison go on to offend

Find out how to support offenders' children and their families

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Barnardo's Registered Charity
Nos. 216250 and SC037605

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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 CRCs and the NPS to support offenders' children

'We was there when he got locked up.'

7 year old girl¹

It is estimated that there are **200,000 children a year** that experience the imprisonment of a parent. Research increasingly shows the impact that parental imprisonment can have on these children – **poorer outcomes, stigma, isolation, health and financial difficulties.**

Probation and parental offending

'There is still stigma... People would think that everybody in the family [is] like that.'

Young Mother²

- Prisoners' families are vulnerable to poverty, debt, housing instability and physical illness³
- Children with a parent in prison are twice as likely to experience mental health problems⁴
- 65% of boys with a parent in prison go on to offend⁵

Offenders' families often face multiple challenges and have complex needs. The disadvantage and stigma that these families experience can mean that children and parents do not seek help or let professionals know when a parent receives a custodial or community sentence, or is under supervision in the community. As there is no systematic identification of which children and families are affected, they can be left feeling isolated and without support.

'It's not just the prisoner that's punished is it? It's the whole family.' Mother⁶

Under the Transforming Rehabilitation (TR) agenda, the National Probation Service (NPS) supervises high risk offenders released into the community, whilst CRCs support low and medium risk offenders – both those who have received community orders and custodial sentences.

Since the introduction of resettlement prisons, offenders are now managed by the same CRC through the gate, from custody to the community. Probation staff are required to develop a rehabilitation plan from the time an offender enters a resettlement prison, and it is important to consider the offenders' children and family from this point. Many offenders will be returning to the family home upon release, and furthermore, parenthood and family ties can be a key reason for desistance from crime – offenders who receive at least one family visit in prison are 39% less likely to reoffend,⁷ whilst strong relationships with children and taking on a parenting role have been found to be incentives for desisting from crime.⁸ During a prison sentence, offenders' children and families may be in particular need of information and support.



In the community, it is important that offenders are worked with holistically, especially as whole family outcomes are likely to be beneficial for both offenders and their children. Since TR, more offenders are being supervised in the community, as those sentenced to less than a year in custody now receive supervision from CRCs. *Working together to safeguard children* outlines that CRCs and the NPS are well placed to identify children who are at risk of anti-social outcomes or involvement in crime and poor outcomes, because of their parent's offending behaviour. The guidance recommends that offender managers should consider parenting responsibilities of offenders, and if interventions would impact on either these responsibilities or improved outcomes for their children.⁹ A multi-agency approach is key – as highlighted by a recent inspection of probation trusts, there is a need for probation, Safeguarding Children's Boards and children's social care teams to have improved understanding of each other's roles, more joined up working and better information sharing.¹⁰

'All we want as a family is just to know what to do, how to go about things because we don't know. Nobody tells you anything.' Mother

The importance of offenders' children and families has long been acknowledged in the criminal justice system as a reducing re-offending pathway, and there is increasingly a national, strategic recognition of their needs. In addition to *Working Together* and the recent inspection mentioned above, children and families were highlighted in the TR evidence regarding reducing re-offending, with a focus on family visits and home leave.¹¹ Furthermore, families where a parent offends are identified as criteria in phase 2 of the Troubled Families programme.¹²

How can NICCO support CRC and NPS professionals?

'I will look to use this as part of my role to help support families in the future.'

CRC professional attending NICCO workshop

NICCO is a national one stop information and advice service for all professionals working with children, families and offenders. It brings together information that can support professionals to work with families affected by parental offending:

- **resources** for offending parents and their children and families
- details of targeted **local and national services** to signpost families to
- details of local **training for professionals**
- up to date, national and local **policy frameworks, government guidance and recommendations** about this group of families
- **guidelines and toolkits** to support professionals to work in a family-focused way, and to assist in developing setting-wide practice
- **research** into the impact of imprisonment on children and families and the importance of this group in reducing reoffending

NICCO recognises that CRC and NPS professionals 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.

References:

- 1 Owen Gill, *Every night you cry: Case studies of 15 Bristol families with a father in prison*, Barnardo's, 2009
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- 3 Rowntree Smith R, Grimshaw R, Romeo R, Knapp M, *Poverty and disadvantage among prisoner's families*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2007
- 4 Joseph Murray, David P. Farrington, Ivana Sekol, Rikke F. Olsen, *Effects of parental imprisonment on child antisocial behaviour and mental health: a systematic review*, Campbell Systematic Reviews 2009:4, 2009
- 5 *ibid*
- 6 Owen Gill, *She just cries and cries: Case studies of Devon families with a father in prison*, Barnardo's, 2010
- 7 Chris May, Nalini Sharma and Duncan Stewart, *Factors linked to reoffending: a one-year follow-up of prisoners who took part in the Resettlement Surveys 2001, 2003 and 2004*, Ministry of Justice, 2008
- 8 See for example: Sampson, R. J., & Laub, J. (1992), *Crime and deviance in the life course*, Annual Review of Sociology, 18, 63-84 and Moloney, M., MacKenzie, K., Hunt, G., & Joe-Laidler, K. (2009), *The path and promise of fatherhood for gang members*, British Journal of Criminology, 49, 305-325
- 9 Department for Education, *Working together to safeguard children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children*, March 2013
- 10 HM Inspectorate of Probation, *An Inspection of the work of Probation Trusts and Youth Offending Teams to protect children and young people*, August 2014
- 11 Gillian Hunter, Oonagh Skrine, Paul Turnbull, Anne Kazimirski, David Pritchard, *Intermediate outcomes of family and intimate relationship interventions: a rapid evidence assessment*, Institute for Criminal Policy Research, New Philanthropy Capital for National Offender Management Service, October 2013
- 12 Department for Communities and Local Government, *Financial Framework for the Expanded Troubled Families Programme*, March 2015

Examples of existing practice

West Yorkshire Community Rehabilitation Company and **Barnardo's** work together in Bradford to provide parenting programmes to fathers on community orders or supervision following a custodial sentence. Offender Managers refer offenders to the course, which can count towards the offenders' order or supervision requirements. The course has a child-centred focus and therefore requires the offender to consider the impact of their behaviour on their children.

Cheshire and Greater Manchester CRC have an Intensive Community Order Team that works with 18-25 year olds at risk of receiving a custodial sentence. The team has a multi-agency approach, partnering with various agencies including POPS (Partners of Prisoners and Families Support Group), and works with individuals and their families to support sustained change in behaviour.

Visit NICCO

Visit www.nicco.org.uk to discover resources to support CRC and NPS professionals and find out more. Sign up to become a member to receive free regular e-news and view case studies.



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