

Child Impact Assessment: Call to Action



Police can:

- ✓ Receive training about the impact on children when a parent, and in particular a mother, is arrested;
- ✓ Put measures in place to reduce as much as possible the trauma of an arrest on children (for example, consider the time and place of the arrest);
- ✓ Provide an additional officer whose role is to focus on the welfare of children if it is known that there will be children present;
- ✓ Pass on information to families about Child Impact Assessments and organisations that can offer support; and
- ✓ Give primary carers who have been arrested the opportunity to make necessary phone calls to ensure their children are safe.

Sentencers can:

- ✓ Be made aware of the serious impact on children when a parent, and in particular a mother, is remanded or sentenced to custody;
- ✓ Be proactive in seeking information about whether a defendant has caring responsibilities;
- ✓ Request a written, detailed PSR (CJSWR in Scotland) for all primary carers;
- ✓ Request a Child Impact Assessment for any children affected to ensure they are recognised within court proceedings and their best interests are taken into account;
- ✓ Avoid remanding a woman to prison when a custodial sentence is unlikely;
- ✓ Make every effort to divert women away from prison; and
- ✓ Provide the opportunity for sole carers to make necessary care arrangements for children before entering prison if a custodial sentence is unavoidable.

Probation staff (England & Wales, Northern Ireland) and Criminal Justice Social Workers (Scotland) can:

- ✓ Receive training on the impact on children of having a parent, and in particular a mother, in the criminal justice system;
- ✓ Write PSRs (CJSWRs in Scotland) that contain as much detail as possible about children and the impact on them of a potential prison sentence;
- ✓ Promote the use of Child Impact Assessments to ensure children's support needs are met;
- ✓ Liaise with other relevant partners to support the use of Child Impact Assessments with children;
- ✓ Receive training on the specific impact on children when a parent has restrictions such as a tag or a curfew;

- ✓ Communicate with families about restrictions and what they might mean in practice, particularly for children;
- ✓ Pass on information to families about support for children, including Child Impact Assessments;
- ✓ Consider the impact on children in post-release and supervision plans;
- ✓ Help manage expectations of release both for those leaving prison and for any family members they may be living with; and
- ✓ Encourage families to consider support for children, including a Child Impact Assessment.

Prison governors can:

- ✓ Provide regular opportunities for parents to talk about concerns they may have about their children;
- ✓ Offer induction visits as early as possible in a parent's sentence so children can see where their parent is living and ask questions about their daily routine;
- ✓ Expand the availability of child-centred visits;
- ✓ Ensure video links are available to supplement (not replace) face-to-face visits;
- ✓ Ensure visits are recognised as the right of the child, rather than as a privilege for their parent's good behaviour or related to the length, or status, of their sentence;
- ✓ Ensure search procedures are carried out in a manner that causes minimum distress to children; and
- ✓ Promote services in the community that offer support to children including the use of Child Impact Assessments.

Child and family social workers can:

- ✓ Receive training on the impact on children of having a parent, and in particular a mother, in prison;
- ✓ Ensure that children with a parent in the criminal justice system receive consistent support throughout their parent's sentence;
- ✓ Liaise effectively with primary carers and all relevant partner agencies to ensure children's needs are fully assessed;
- ✓ Ensure primary carers in prison receive all relevant paperwork and timely invitations to supervision and care proceedings concerning their children; and
- ✓ Use a Child Impact Assessment to gain a full picture of children's needs and to ensure their own views are taken into consideration.

UK governments can:

- ✓ Ensure measures are in place to minimise the use of imprisonment for sole and primary carers;
- ✓ Ensure legislation and policy documents recognise and mitigate the impact on children of having a primary carer in the criminal justice system;
- ✓ Recognise that children with a parent in the criminal justice system deserve support in and of their own right and not as a means of influencing their parent's rehabilitation;
- ✓ Encourage all criminal justice stakeholders (police, sentencers, probation, prison staff) to consider, and mitigate, the impact on children of having a primary carer in the criminal justice system;
- ✓ Call for data collection and sharing about children to be open, transparent, and sensitive;
- ✓ Provide sustainable funding to specialist organisations that support children and families affected by imprisonment;
- ✓ Invest in women's centres to provide a one-stop place of safety where women can receive emotional support and practical help with parenting; and
- ✓ Support the use of Child Impact Assessments at all stages of a parent's journey through the criminal justice system to ensure children get the support they need.

Children's Commissioners can:

- ✓ Recognise children with a parent in the criminal justice system as a vulnerable group who need support and protection; and
- ✓ Promote the use of Child Impact Assessments to ensure children get timely and appropriate support.

Local authorities can:

- ✓ Include children impacted by parental imprisonment as a vulnerable group in their strategic planning with particular recognition of children affected by maternal imprisonment;
- ✓ Ensure that information about parental imprisonment, including where to go for support, is readily available to children and carers; and
- ✓ Commit to piloting, and evaluating, the use of Child Impact Assessments to ensure children get timely and appropriate support.

Education leaders can:

- ✓ Ensure all nursery and school staff receive training on the impact on children of having a parent, and in particular a mother, in the criminal justice system;
- ✓ Actively reduce the stigma and shame associated with parental imprisonment by raising awareness through the curriculum or school assemblies; and
- ✓ Appoint school 'champions' who are trained in how to support children affected through using a Child Impact Assessment.

Police and Crime Commissioners (Chief, Deputy Chief, and Assistant Chief Constables in Scotland and Northern Ireland) can:

- ✓ Recognise children with a parent in the criminal justice system as a vulnerable group who need support and protection;
- ✓ Promote the use of Child Impact Assessments to ensure children get timely and appropriate support; and
- ✓ Commit funding to pilot, and evaluate, the use of Child Impact Assessments.

Criminal Justice Boards can:

- ✓ Recognise children affected by imprisonment, especially maternal imprisonment, as a vulnerable group who need support and protection; and
- ✓ Commit to piloting and evaluating the use of Child Impact Assessments to ensure children get timely and appropriate support.