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Children of Prisoners: Virtual Communities
Negotiating and Managing Relationships, Isolation and Stigma

Researcher: Amanda Swallow
Children of Prisoners

- only 9% of children of imprisoned mothers are cared for by their fathers – compared to 92% who are cared for by their mothers\(^1\).

- 5 % of children whose mothers are in prison remain in their own homes\(^2\).

- 24% of children are cared for by grandparents\(^3\).

- between 11-15% of children are placed into care as a result of their mother’s imprisonment\(^4\).
Children of Prisoners

- Experiences of social exclusion (political and societal)\(^5\).

- Alleged increased risk of expressing anti-social behaviour – Recently used as a political tool\(^6\).

- Recent research found that imprisonment costs state agencies (NHS, social services) an average of £4,800 over six months, per family\(^7\).
Children of Prisoners

• 66% of women in prison (4,252) have dependent children\(^8\).

• 7% (approximately 600,000) of the child population at school has an imprisoned parent, annually\(^9\).

• Under-researched!
Children of Prisoners

It is suggested that 160,000 children are affected by their parents’ imprisonment, annually within England and Wales\textsuperscript{10}.

However!

There is no single statutory body dedicated to the care, welfare or support of these children. No actual data is collected & all figures quoted so far are \textit{estimates}.
Children of Prisoners

The very few researchers investigating this issue agree that there are particularly negative effects upon children who experience parental imprisonment, such as:

- Experiences of trauma (especially where a parent is arrested in the home)\textsuperscript{11}.
- Mental health issues (currently being debated and investigated)\textsuperscript{12}.
- May be stigmatised due to their parent’s imprisonment\textsuperscript{13}.
Legislation / Policy

- Ministry of Justice introduce gender specific standards for women in prison\(^{14}\).

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 – Article 9 – implies the right that children have to maintain contact with imprisoned parents\(^{15}\).

National Offender Management Service (NOMS policies) – Claim that children and families are the most important pathways\(^\text{17}\).  

Corston Report – Four recommendations specific to female offenders, parenting and their children\(^\text{18}\).  

Every Child Matters – Prisoners’ children have worse outcomes than other children, in terms of health and education, amongst others\(^\text{19}\).
For a full version of this presentation, please contact Amanda Swallow: amanda.swallow@hud.ac.uk