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

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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[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 *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)[11].

- Mental health issues (currently being debated and investigated)[12].

- May be stigmatised due to their parent's imprisonment[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].

- Human Rights –Family Life - Human Rights Act 1998 – Article 8 – "Respect for Private and Family Life"[16].

Legislation / Policy (Cont.)

- National Offender Management Service (NOMS policies) – Claim that children and families are the most important pathways[17].

- Corston Report – Four recommendations specific to female offenders, parenting and their children[18].

- Every Child Matters – Prisoners' children have worse outcomes than other children, in terms of health and education, amongst others[19].

For a full version of this presentation, please contact Amanda Swallow:
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