



# **Hear Our Voice**

## **Support and Advocacy for Children and Young People affected by the imprisonment of a family member**

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# Children's Charter – Our Voice

## for Children and Young People with a Family Member in prison

- Pact ran a series of workshops in inner London with children and young people aged 13-17 years
- Asked them what they wanted from:
  - Adults in power
  - Their parents
  - The police
  - Teachers
  - Magistrates and judges
  - Prison staff
  - Charities such as Pact

**WE ARE THE  
CHILDREN AND  
YOUNG PEOPLE  
WHO HAVE  
EXPERIENCED  
A PARENT  
OR BROTHER  
OR SISTER  
BEING ARRESTED,  
TRIED,  
AND  
IMPRISONED.**



**WE BELIEVE  
THAT WE SHOULD  
HAVE THE  
FOLLOWING  
RIGHTS.**

OUR VOICE: THE CHARTER FOR  
CHILDREN'S & YOUNG PEOPLE  
WITH A FAMILY MEMBER IN PRISON

[www.prisonadvice.org.uk/ourvoice](http://www.prisonadvice.org.uk/ourvoice)



# Children's Charter – Our Voice

## for Children and Young People with a Family Member in prison

### The Results:

- For homes to be respected
- To be informed
- To be heard
- To have a choice
- Not to be judged
- To be offered emotional support
- To be respected

# Hear Our Voice

## Support and Advocacy for Children and Young People with a Family Member in prison

- From “Our Voice”, Pact have launched a new project: “Hear Our Voice” which aims to **raise awareness** and **improve practice** for children and young people affected by familial imprisonment – **within schools, within the police and within the courts**.
- “Hear Our Voice” - aims to get the **voices** of these “**invisible children**” who are affected by imprisonment heard.

# Hear Our Voice

## Youth Engagement and Support

Pact are running youth group sessions for young people (aged 12-17) with a family member in prison.

These sessions are a form of **emotional support and advice** and:

- Provide **targeted support** – delivered by professional youth workers
- Provide a space where the young people can talk about their experiences with other people in a **similar situation**
- Provide access to **group support** from peers without the presence of their parents

# Hear Our Voice

## Youth Engagement and Support

These sessions are also (hopefully!) fun – the aim is to **empower** and **uncover** the voices of these young people through a range of activities including:

- Film-making
- Photography
- Slam poetry
- Street dance
- Graffiti art

The group will also help with the **production and design** of a new website, accessible to **other young people** affected by imprisonment.

**DO YOU HAVE A FAMILY MEMBER IN PRISON?**

**WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR VOICE HEARD?**

Learn how to

**MAKE FILMS**

**DESIGN WEBSITES**

**EDIT PODCASTS**

with a trained film-maker.

Express yourself through

**SLAM POETRY**

**GRAFFITI ART**

**& MUSIC**

Sessions will run **fortnightly on Saturday afternoons** at **29 Peckham Road, London, SE5 8UA**, beginning on **28th May**.

**IF YOU ARE AGED 12-17, GET INVOLVED IN HEAR OUR VOICE .**



To get involved or for more information, please email [hearourvoice@prisonadvice.org.uk](mailto:hearourvoice@prisonadvice.org.uk) or telephone free on **0808 808 3444**.



# Hear Our Voice

## Schools

- Partnered with Place2Be to raise awareness and develop training and resources to ensure that agencies feel confident to provide appropriate support to children and families who find themselves affected by imprisonment.
- The training shines a spotlight on familial imprisonment, raising awareness of the emotional and educational support needs of children with a family member in prison and advising on how best to identify, engage with and respond to their needs.
- The training also aims to reduce the stigma surrounding familial imprisonment by promoting a positive school environment.

# Hear Our Voice

## Our School's Promise to Children and Young People

Our school will:

- provide you with someone who will **listen to you**;
- treat what you tell us **in confidence** (unless this would mean someone might be harmed);
- **support you** in any way we can to achieve your **full potential**;
- **not judge you** or disrespect you by the actions of any members of your family;
- **not assume** that we know how you feel;
- **respect your right** to choose whether or not to keep in touch with family member in prison; and
- give **authorisation** for you to visit an imprisoned family member without implication to **attendance records**.

# Hear Our Voice

## Our School's Promise to Parents, Carers and Guardians

Our school will:

- **work with you**, so that **together** we can support the child/young person;
- do all that we can to make sure that the child **fulfils their full academic and social potential** and that the situation they are in does not put them at any disadvantage;
- **provide emotional support to your child** to help them cope with separation from their imprisoned parent;
- **agree a plan** with you so that if the child/young person wants to keep in contact with a family member in prison, this can be done without missing out on important schoolwork;
- keep a **list of sources of help and support** families affected by imprisonment;
- **be informed and to seek to undertake specialised training** to help us understand the issues that affect families around familial imprisonment to be able to offer families support and guidance of other professionals and organisation; and
- **be discreet.**

# Hear Our Voice

## Police

- The aim is to raise awareness and improve practice within the police force about children affected by police actions.
- One specific issue that has come up on many occasions is the impact of home searches and raids on children . Whilst we fully recognise the necessity of such actions by the police, we are keen to work with the police to explore what practical things might be done to mitigate and minimise the harm caused to children from these experiences.
- A house raid could be the child's first experience of the criminal justice system.
- Recent research (*COPING (2014); Roberts et al (2013)*) backs up what we have repeatedly been told by children who have experienced a family member's arrest: it is emotionally disturbing and can have a profound impact on the psychological and physical well-being of a child witnessing such events: witnessing the arrest of a household member is a distinct and significant predictor of post-traumatic stress symptoms.

# Hear Our Voice

## Police

- The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (**PACE**) Codes of Practice govern the police powers and safeguards in the UK - Code B and G contain the Code of Practice governing **house searches and arrest**
- The powers to search a home must be used “with **respect** for people who occupy premises being searched”.
- The only reference to children in either of these codes is to children at risk of harm from the **arrestee** and children who have absconded from **local authority accommodation** who have been remanded or committed by a court.
- Current research has found that when planning a house raid/arrest, the only preliminary question police answer in respect of children is a tick box “Are there any **children or animals** present?”

# Hear Our Voice

## Police

Pact have drafted a “[Model Policy for Metropolitan Police when conducting arrests](#)”

This policy includes:

- **Training:** Police to be trained on [child development](#), the [effects of trauma](#) on the child, and how to effectively communicate with the child using [developmentally appropriate language](#) during an arrest
- **Pre-Arrest Planning:** Police to consider the [ages and likely location](#) of any children when determining the time, place and logistics of executing the arrest/search and to consider whether the arrest/search could be delayed until the child is [not likely](#) to be present.

# Hear Our Voice

## Police

- **During arrest:** If possible, for police to make the arrest (including handcuffing) **away from child's sight and hearing**; to allow the arrested adult to **assure the child** they will be safe and provided for; ensuring **suitable childcare** for child; providing details to non-arrested carer and (where appropriate) child of **police station** that the arrested adult is being taken to, as well as **telephone numbers for advice helplines** eg Prisoners' Families and Friends Service
- **Follow up:** if the child is temporarily placed with alternative carers, Police officers should ensure that **follow-up** is performed, by a **police officer, social worker** or other
- **Documentation:** Whenever an arrest is made, the existence of a child, present or not, shall be noted in the **arrest report**.

## **Katherine Copperthwaite**

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