

'KEEPING CHILDREN CONNECTED'

PROGRESS AND PARENTAL IMPRISONMENT: A CHILD'S PERSPECTIVE
8 JUNE 18, MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

Partners of Prisoners and Family Support Group
(POPS) & Children of Prisoners Europe (COPE)

Conference Outcome Report



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Introduction

This report serves to summarize the proceedings of an international conference on the issue of children with an imprisoned parent. Hosted by Manchester Metropolitan University on 8 June 2018 and organised by Partners of Prisoners and Family Support Group (POPS) and the network Children of Prisoners Europe (COPE), the conference centred on presentations and discussions focusing on maintaining the bond between children and their imprisoned parent. This report is based primarily on delegate presentations, and, in the introductory section, an overview of significant themes and outcomes.

Today, approximately 1 million children in the European Union and over 2 million in the Council of Europe are estimated to have a parent in conflict with the law or imprisoned on a given day each year. Organising initiatives concerning children with imprisoned parents necessitates a creative, multi-sectoral approach—fundamental to the approach of the COPE network—and as such the conference, attended by 131 delegates from 18 different countries, was organised as a forum of international and European policymakers, European Parliament members, judges, police and prison personnel, child welfare agencies, child psychologists and civil society organisations. Delegates paid special attention to progress in programming around maintaining the link between child and parent, as well as examining the interplay of media and communications technology in maintaining that connection. In a consensus shared by all Conference delegates, a major challenge to protecting children affected by parental imprisonment is the paucity of scientific data: there is an imperative need for integrated data collection schemes.

Centring the rights and wellbeing of children with imprisoned parents is always crucial to working with children of imprisoned parents, and all of COPE's work is underpinned by the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. The framing of this year's conference diverged from past years in exploring the reciprocal benefits of maintaining familial contacts for the prisoner his or herself. Lord Michael Farmer's discussion of the rehabilitative effects for prisoners of maintaining family ties, after a 2017 report published under his auspices, served as a call for support for children with imprisoned parents through multi-sectoral initiatives for imprisoned parents themselves. The Farmer Review's primary finding is that prison services and enforcement officers in particular lack discourse—in his words, they lack respect—for the importance of families in a prisoner's rehabilitation, and standards for maintaining bonds consequently suffer. The Review suggests an embedding of this respect in programs across prison services, from visitor centres, staffing structures, extended visits, family learning and 'gateway' communication systems. The conference included a number of representatives

from the police and prisons for this reason, as recognition of the importance of organising with prisons and enforcement officials, those professionals that directly mediate the child-parent relationship when the latter is imprisoned.

COPE had the opportunity to discuss the recently released Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)5 concerning children with imprisoned parents, a landmark series of recommendations honouring the rights of children of incarcerated parents and establishing standards for the promotion of those rights. The Recommendation includes protocols and obligations for police, prison and justice departments that recognise and uphold the rights of the child while working within a framework that holds the best interests of each child paramount. COPE also announced that the Recommendation would be accompanied by an Implementation Guide to assist member states and stakeholders—the judiciary, health and social sectors, prison staff, police, schools, NGOs, child rights advocates and parents' associations—in putting those suggestions and protocols into effect.

The latter portion of the conference included a panel focused on the issue of media's engagement with the issue of children with imprisoned parents and the role the media has in shaping public discourse about crime, imprisonment, and the stigmatization of those individuals involved, whether directly or through familial relation. The panelists approached the issue from multiple angles—as media professionals themselves, as academics, from the organisational sector and as politicians—stressing the importance of educating those in the media sector about the effects of their framing and recognising the potential role media might play in shifting public discourse about children with imprisoned parents.

Key Conference Outcomes

1. Parental imprisonment is qualified as an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACEs) that can have traumatising effects on a child. All stakeholders involved need to ask how to mitigate this trauma and honour the rights of children with imprisoned parents.
2. Prison services and those working in the prison context need to recognise and respect the importance of maintaining family ties for both children and their parent in prison. Encouraging prisoners to assume their role as parent fosters a sense of responsibility and self-importance for prisoners, thereby improving the prison atmosphere generally.
3. Children experience the imprisonment of a parent in myriad ways. Providing programmes that help children to develop resiliency is key.
4. Children and young people should be seen as having potential, both in and of themselves and as experts in being children with an imprisoned parent. Their experiences make children's voices and opinions essential resources when developing support programs and designing standards for protocol.
5. Multi-sectoral collaboration around providing support for prisoners and their children is of utmost importance.
6. There is an imperative need for integrated data collection schemes at all levels and across all sectors.
7. Technology should be utilised as a primary resource in maintaining connection between child and prisoner, and the opportunities for creative programming are extensive.
8. The framing of media surrounding crime, imprisonment and the people involved needs to be examined and urgently challenged, especially when it comes to the portrayal of children with imprisoned parents. Media shifts public discourse and can therefore be a resource in changing the discussion.

Presentations

Welcome & Introduction - Diane Curry OBE, POPS & Lucy Gampell OBE, COPE

Diane Curry, POPS Chief Executive Officer, welcomed conference delegates to Manchester, a city defined, in her words, by resilience and innovation. Diane thanked Lord Farmer, Baroness Hughes and all the practitioners working with children for their presence and support. She encouraged participants to take the opportunity of the conference to speak to people, contribute, share what they do and enjoy themselves. COPE President Lucy Gampell extended thanks to POPS for hosting the 2018 conference, which is also supported by Manchester Metropolitan University and co-funded by the European Union, and spoke to the geographical diversity of delegates, with people coming from across the UK, across Europe and from the United States. Lucy gave a special welcome to Lord Michael Farmer, who focuses on social justice issues at the House of Lords, noting his 2017 publication of the final report of the Farmer Review on the importance of prisoners' families.

A Milestone: The Farmer Review - Lord Michael Farmer

Lord Farmer began by thanking Diane Curry for her role in the publication of the Farmer Review, which discusses the importance of family relationships in ensuring prisoners' rehabilitation. The Review has found that over 40% of men will return to prison after release; in contrast, men who have family visits are 39% less likely to reoffend. Lord Farmer highlighted that keeping a child connected with their parent can mitigate the harm of a parent's imprisonment, and that it is essential to consider effects on children when their mother is incarcerated. His presentation focused largely on the recommendations of the review, the response of policy makers and what is being done to implement the recommendations.

Why are family relations so essential? And how can children keep connected to their imprisoned parent? Why are family relations so essential? When a parent is imprisoned, children are deprived of a parent, and the effect on the child is similar to the breakdown of family during divorce. Among the countries in the OECD, the UK has one of the highest rates of family breakdown, with over 1/4 of children living with their mother and not their father. It is so common for children to experience family breakdown that adults tend to normalise it. Lord Farmer mentioned that policy should take more notice of the large or growing minority of families with difficulties, as families are the basis of our society. It is within our families that we learn how to share, communicate and exercise self-control. Children's wellbeing depends on them experiencing safe, stable and nurturing relationships. According to Lord Farmer, governments must make it possible for

every citizen to have enough money to live on their own without support, as being a single parent is the fastest route into poverty. He mentioned that his greater ambition is that the review will be critical in developing wider family policy to tackle the wider breakdown of family relationships.

Lord Farmer further discussed family responsibilities, saying that they do not cease when men are brought into custody: 'We cannot let men go into their cells, shrug their shoulders and say that they cannot do anything about their families and children. Employment is often a focus for prisoners, but maintaining family ties is not'. Family-related activities can provide meaning and motivation for prisoners. Lord Farmer likened maintaining family relations to the third leg of a stool, where education and employment are the other two. One recommendation in the Farmer Review is that family visits should be disconnected from the prisoners' incentive schemes, and that leadership programmes for new prison governors should give them a solid grasp of the importance of family relationships and tools for building personal relationships.

Lord Farmer expressed that the clearest finding of the Farmer Review is that there is an unacceptable inconsistency in the respect of the importance of families across prison services. Respect for prisoners' families needs to be embedded in visitor centres, staffing structures, extended visits, family learning and 'gateway' communication systems. He praised POPS' Popsicle the penguin as an example of an initiative that can be taken to transform the environment for children and their families. Popsicle is a cartoon penguin created by POPS and displayed throughout several British prisons to accompany children on their journey through the prison and security checks by providing simple instructions and visual distractions. Lord Farmer remarked that POPS helps to make visits congenial for children and families and is indicative of a culture that respects them.

Lord Farmer described familial relationships as the 'golden thread' running through prison processes. Lord Farmer recommended that each prison should establish a clear, audible gateway communication line in order to maintain this golden thread between the family and the prisoner's rehabilitation process, as families can be an asset to improving prisoners' mental health.

Towards the end of his presentation, Lord Farmer stressed that the first duty of the government is protecting the citizens of the country. He spoke about how bringing men face to face with family responsibility reduces the rates of recidivism, and could thus potentially mean an outcome of fewer costs, fewer victims, more tax revenue and less welfare payments. When considering family relations of prisoners in the UK, it is important to keep in mind that 1 in 8 prisoners are foreign nationals from European countries and they have limited options for seeing their families. For these prisoners the use of Skype is crucial. Concluding

recommendations from the study advised the government to develop an action plan. Lord Farmer subsequently meets regularly with implementation teams that provide the government with updates. He believes more needs to be done to ensure that family relations—the golden thread—are maintained throughout the prison system. Lord Farmer concluded by stating that men have enduring responsibilities to their families. There is a need to harness family relationships and put a focus on the importance of preventing reoffending. In order to keep innovating and developing good practices, we have to use all tools at our disposal to tackle intergenerational crime.

Process and Progress - Anne Fox, Clinks

Anne Fox, Clinks Chief Executive Officer, spoke to conference participants about the process and progress of the Farmer review in family relations. Clinks is a national charity and is considered as a backbone organisation for charities such as POPS, across England and Wales. The process of conducting the Farmer review involved 1,475 charities, social enterprises and voluntary organisations in England who work with offenders, ex-offenders and their families. Anne emphasised that a large number of voluntary organisations contributed to the review. A number of public consultations included discussions on how to support men in prison. There was a public call for contributions, and through the network of voluntary organisations a survey was organised. There were 531 responses from men in their prison cells, the responses included clear indications of items that would be helpful in moving forward. Anne highlighted the review as being quite pragmatic, and grounded in reality, noting that much of what is being called for can be taken forward with vision and hard work. It was acknowledged that the perspectives of women and children in prisons were not considered in this review. Anne concluded by saying that throughout the process of the review, momentum and a reputation for doing the work well were built. She emphasised the important role of voluntary organisations, saying they need to be able to innovate and develop programmes and initiatives to meet the identified needs.

The Farmer Review: A Response from Young People

Rebecca Cheung, Communications and Training officer at POPS introduced a short film that was created in recognition of the contribution of the Farmer review. The film is entitled 'We are the Golden Thread' and can be found [here](#). Rebecca encouraged all conference participants to consider the following question: If families are the golden thread, how do we encourage them to own this accolade? Rebecca emphasised the importance of recognising the underlying importance of the Farmer review, saying that it's all about people, and that POPS has always been about people and relationships, and have always worked hard to give people a voice. Through the video, POPS wanted to

remind people of the impact this report has on families, and asked families of prisoners what family means to them. At the heart of the report are real lives and real people.

Children of Prisoners: Planning for the Future - Baroness Beverley Hughes, Greater Manchester's Deputy Mayor for Policing & Crime

In Greater Manchester, there is a new police and crime plan that sets out a commitment to work to educate, support and protect families, while still intervening when necessary. Baroness Hughes re-emphasised Lord Farmer's assumption that positive family relationships help to reduce reoffending, and are critical to children's wellbeing and development. For her, family-centric programmes need to be at the heart of prison reform, and prisons should be connected to communities as opposed to fundamentally separate.

While the Farmer review and its 19 recommendations have been accepted by the government, Baroness Hughes highlighted that the pace of change must be faster, saying that it is not only the responsibility of governments, but that it falls to all of us. There are around 200,000 children affected by parental imprisonment in the UK. Baroness Hughes discussed how a parent's imprisonment causes enormous emotional distress, and that children may experience trauma surrounding their parent's arrest.

Baroness Hughes continued by discussing parenting capability, which is widely recognised as an issue in Greater Manchester. In Greater Manchester a problem-solving approach has been designed for mothers, which has helped keep more mothers together and reduce reoffending. This is possible thanks in part to community support, which is hugely important and needs to be joined up with prison visitor's centres. When the service user is involved right from the start, in designing the way family support is established, services for mothers, babies and pregnant women are better integrated. In time, this enhanced offer in Greater Manchester will see better provision of support to prisoners and their families. Baroness Hughes presented some key questions that partners are asked to consider: how to capture the voice of people in need? How to design? How to work effectively in partnership? In Greater Manchester there is a robust approach to public sector reform in general, to ensure that people receive the right support at the right time. There is collaboration between a number of cities. When young people end up in the criminal justice system, it is maintained that they are a child first, and an offender second.

Baroness Hughes introduced the concept of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) for the first time in the conference, and the fact that the impact they can have on children is increasingly recognised. She underlined that a restorative justice process is being established, in order to ensure that change is

sustained. Baroness Hughes spoke about how in the UK, the number of young people serving a sentence has reduced, though the complexity surrounding their sentence has increased. They are often far from home and their families, which presents a challenge for government. Progress has been made thanks to the government empowerment programme and the Ministry of Justice is putting offender-manager key programmes into place.

Baroness Hughes concluded by saying that many families feel helpless about their children being drawn into criminality, and that while we should focus on the needs of children with imprisoned parents, we should also look at preventing children from becoming children with imprisoned parents. This requires a focus on parenting and enforcing reforms such as the ones mentioned above. Baroness Hughes called on those present to stand together to advocate for these children and to change the system, saying that to effect change we need the political will, but also the bottom-up commitment to advocacy.

Research: Building a Platform

COPING: Making the Case for Change - Ben Raikes, *University of Huddersfield*

Ben Raikes began his presentation by sharing with conference attendees that at the time, the study "Children of Prisoners: Interventions and Mitigations to Strengthen Mental Health (COPING)," which COPE published in 2012, was the largest study of the lived experience of children with a parent living in prison. The focus of the study was really to hear from children in this situation. Ben introduced the study, which is primarily concerned with that which helps children to remain resilient. The study involved four countries with NGO partners in each country. Ben discussed the benefits to collaborating with NGOs, saying that it is easier to enlist participants and that participants have a great source of support. The study focused on children between the ages of 7-17. Approximately 1000 surveys were completed and stakeholders were consulted. Initial findings showed there was disproportionate recruitment of imprisoned mothers.

Key findings of the COPING project demonstrated that children with imprisoned parents are at a greater risk of mental health issues than other children. Overall, children's resilience was found to be closely linked to open communication; positive prison visiting environments are essential; telephone contact is very important and highly valued; schools have a lot of potential to contribute to children's wellbeing and are a source of stability. Young people who provided feedback said that witnessing the arrest of a parent is a terrible experience.

They requested quality visits and information on their parent's situation, and they expressed a desire for the issue of parental imprisonment to be raised and normalised, as a way to reduce bullying and stigma. The COPING study contributed to this awareness raising, particularly among police, and fed into important policy change.

Ben mentioned that COPE member organisation Alternative Social won an award for their contribution to civil society/the COPING project, and spoke about INCCIP and one of INCCIP's members Frances Ssubi, which is working to provide support for families affected by imprisonment in Uganda. Ben discussed that in Europe, organisations and actors working with and for children with imprisoned parents are well-served by the COPE network when it comes to sharing resources and support. In less developed countries with fewer resources, there is a clear need to connect people. INCCIP is hoping to work closely with COPE to join together organisations and individuals championing the rights of children with incarcerated parents beyond Europe. Ben concluded his presentation with a few comments on the role of grandparents, saying that they are an essential resource and provide a key support system in many families impacted by parental imprisonment.

What Does Progress Look Like? Invisible Walls Wales: An Evaluation Corin Morgan-Armstrong, HMP Parc

Corin Morgan-Armstrong, Head of Family Interventions at HMP Parc in Bridgend, South Wales, gave a presentation on the Invisible Walls project that began in 2012 at HMP Parc. The project is now a regular service delivery funded by Prison and Probation services and the group that runs the prison. It is deliberately not a big project, but offers an opportunity to a small number of families over a long period of time. The project typically includes 20 families a year, in which the father has been imprisoned a number of times before, with a 66% chance of reoffending (medium to high risk). In choosing families to participate in the project, Corin underscored the importance of gathering information across services and sectors about the whole family. This includes an understanding of whether the children are in school or if they have been excluded from school, or if they have behavioural issues. The cases involved in this project are typically complex and not easy to work with: children could be in care, or, on the other hand, there could be situations where there are several mothers with one father in prison. The Invisible Walls project aims 'to purposefully create an empathic awakening,' building hope among prisoners through family interventions and specifically through supporting connection with the child.

The Invisible Walls model functions through the provision of a single point of contact, a mentor for the prisoner. This person is available for all family members, for up to 12 months of pre-release support and up to 10 months of post-release

support. There is a need for transitional support for families, to ease the return of the imprisoned parent back into family life. With Invisible Walls, there are a number of initiatives inside and outside the prisons. The mentors organise a range of activities with the families. Corin discussed the 5 year evaluation of Invisible Walls Wales 'Prisoners' families and children: Can the walls be invisible'? Key findings of the evaluation highlighted the importance of maintaining positive family relationships, and the positive impact of the project on improved accommodation, employment, mental health and substance misuse. Improvements were observed in the accommodation and employment status of prisoner's families, in children's attendance and performance in schools.

The Invisible Walls accord toolkit is a resource that has demonstrated early outcomes including reduction in stigma associated with parental imprisonment; a decrease in bullying; an increase in appropriate identification of children affected by parental imprisonment. Mr. Morgan-Armstrong concluded by saying that Invisible Walls is the opposite of cherry-picking 'positive' candidates for better results.

Transforming Lives: Reducing Women's Imprisonment

Sarah Beresford, Prison Reform Trust & Dr Shona Minson, University of Oxford

Sarah Beresford presented on the Prison Reform Trust Transforming Lives Program and began by introducing the subject of maternal imprisonment, which affects 17,240 children in England and Wales. The programme included a consultation process with a mix of practitioners and experts, as well as families. Children shared that having a mum in prison is very hard, though it was observed that children's feelings change over time and vary. The consultation process revealed that in situations of parental imprisonment, the views and concerns of individual children are rarely taken into account. Children reported feeling invisible, and that they had to keep their mother's imprisonment a secret. Mothers were afraid their children would be taken away if people found out they were in prison. Every area of life is disrupted, and only 5% of children remained in the family home when mum went to prison. Grandparents were found to be an incredible support, but it isn't always easy for them. One girl shared that she couldn't concentrate in school, as she felt defined by the fact that her mum was in prison. One question considered was what stopped children from getting support early on. A common response was that women are often fearful of asking for support. Throughout the programme, it was found that parental imprisonment was really difficult, but particularly when it is the mother. This was found to be the case even for children not living with a mother prior to imprisonment. So what was found to make the difference? It was identified that peer support groups and one-on-one visits with mum were found to be helpful. Sarah concluded by emphasising that children and young people should be seen as having potential, not as being a problem. Children and

young people need adequate support before a parent gets to the point of being in prison, and more resources should be put into community programs, so there are credible alternatives to custody.

Dr. Shona Minson, from the University of Oxford, spoke about the rights of children in adult sentencing proceedings. She met with children and their caretakers to hear about their experiences with sentencing proceedings, connecting with 27 families and speaking with Crown Court Judges. What Dr. Minson found was that judicial understanding of the impact of maternal imprisonment on children is very limited. The adults who take on the care of children whose parent is sentenced to prison have their lives utterly disrupted. Dr. Minson identified a need to communicate on all levels of the justice system, and produced four films, one for sentencers, one for advocates, one for penitentiary services staff and one for mothers. In the film for sentencers, a number of sentencing guidelines are presented, one of these guidelines being that it may be appropriate to suspend custody if it would cause significant harm for others. The film explains the court is not always concerned with the individual, but with obtaining justice. The consequences of a parent's custodial sentence on their children can be catastrophic; caretaker's lives and wellbeing are also impacted. It is the court's duty to ensure they have sufficient information on families and potential consequences on children. There should be a pre-sentence report to ensure that this takes place and to consider how to minimise harm to children.

Technology: 'Keeping up with the Joneses'

Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)5: A Framework for COPE's 2018 Campaign

Liz Ayre & Hannah Lynn, COPE

Liz Ayre, Executive Director of COPE discussed the Council of Europe Recommendation concerning children with imprisoned parents, published 4 April 2018. Liz spoke about being in a reactive phase and called on conference participants to share ideas as to how to best respond to the Recommendation. The Recommendation is not a force of law, but it was unanimously adopted. It is addressed to member states, recommending that they be guided in their policies and standards. The measures included in the guidelines are relevant to prison directors and prison staff. Under the Recommendation, children concerned by imprisoned parents are entitled to the same rights and protection as all children.

Liz underlined that contact between children and their parent can have a positive impact on the child, the parent, prison staff and the prison environment.

There is a need for further awareness raising of these facts. The Recommendation brings UNCRC principles to the prison world, linking children's rights to particular articles. Children with imprisoned parents have a particular set of needs to be met and data collection is crucial. Liz highlighted the need for monitoring of the implementation of the Recommendation from relevant ministries, though there is a question of who would be responsible for this. The PC-CP is one body that was suggested, as a way of keeping the monitoring on a peer-to-peer level. Liz concluded by sharing that the Recommendation has been used as a framework for rolling out a father support program in Bulgaria and that COPE is preparing an implementation guidance document. Ideally this document would foster open-ended systems and promote ideas that transcend borders.

Hannah Lynn, Assistant Director at COPE, spoke briefly about the 2018 'Not my Crime, Still my sentence' Campaign, with its main objectives of awareness-raising and policy goals. The plan for the campaign is to have children from across Europe work on re-writing the Recommendation, to make it more accessible. The overall goal is for children to better understand how the Recommendation can have an impact on their lives and on the lives of others. Hannah outlined the importance of child participation principles in the campaign, including that children should understand why they are being asked to participate, be given the option to refuse to participate and the importance of follow-up to help children understand the impact of their ideas. Hannah emphasised that children with imprisoned parents are not one homogenous group and that we need to be careful about identifying children by their experiences, as that can lead to defining them by their experience. In order to support children however, we need to know where they are and be able to identify them, so there is somewhat of a paradox. For the campaign workshops, facilitators should be sensitive, aware of the fact that these are workshops not support groups, and they should avoid influencing and paraphrasing the children's ideas. Children's participation should not interfere with child protection, but child participation does not equal child protection. If we overprotect children, they may feel unable to share. Facilitators will need to be flexible and adapt to the individual needs of the young people present. Something to keep in mind is the need for positive, solution-based language that treats the prison service as a competent partner. This solution-based framing is key to COPE's way of working. Working with partners such as the prison service can produce amazing results. One of COPE's objectives is working as a network to focus on framing to best present messages to competent partners.

In preparation for the conference, POPS completed a pilot workshop with a number of children and produced a video of the experience. In the video, children are supported by members of POPS' staff to transform articles 25 and 26

of the [Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec\(2018\)5](#) into child-friendly language. The video can be viewed [here](#).

Staying in Touch: The Digital Revolution

Mark Hanson & Stuart Hall, HMP Lowdham Grange

Mark Hanson and Stuart Hall began their presentation by highlighting the importance of family, and saying that the power of family should never be underestimated. Prisoners rely on hope. They discussed how social capital is very important and that we all need someone to love and care for, and someone to love and care for us. They discussed their current focus of redesigning the prison visits area at HMP Lowdham Grange. There is a new family link officer, who will be talking to families about prisons and showing videos to families. There will be a photo booth in the visits area. There has been new media innovation at the prison, with video being produced and directed by serving prisoners. There are 7 developers from the prison population; they are the ones that have to push the innovation forward. Prison television is not very common; Inside media started in 2012. It is a television station run by prisoners for prisoners. The videos produced represent a qualification in communication, addressing how we communicate and how we are communicated (how do others see us). Videos include topics such as how to hold an open-ended conversation. In total there have been over 1200 hours of original television produced, and topics for television are chosen by prisoners. Channels have started on stress reduction, items that might be calming before getting on the phone with families, skills training and work opportunities.

One initiative that is well-established and very popular is the Storytime Dads programme at Lowdham, where a dad will be recording reading a book on tape, which is then sent to their children. Prisoners working with the media programme taught themselves to animate and create 3D films where they insert themselves into the video and games. After the initial 'Storytime Dads' programme, it was observed that the word 'Dads' presented somewhat of a barrier to family interaction. Different names for the programme were suggested, including 'It's Storytime', 'Get the message' and 'Storytime live'. It was decided 'Storytime live' should be the new name of the initiative, and it is now part of family days. Stories are recorded during family days and then sent home with families. Within Inside media, there is a members-only, interactive child-friendly website, where the children are members.

My Time: An App for Children - Dr Lorna Brookes, My Time

Lorna Brookes runs face-to-face peer support programmes for children affected by parental imprisonment and is also a lecturer at John Moores University in child health and wellbeing, specialising in children with imprisoned parents. Lorna

spoke about her ambition to bring practice and academia closer together, and discussed her experience running support groups, noting that when children come to support groups they are away from the prison area and they are able to meet others with the same experience, which is hugely valuable. Lorna found that some of the older children were swapping contacts and creating their own peer-to-peer support. Lorna won a grant to develop an app, which is being created with app developers and children. The target users are children and the project itself is being carried out with close child participation. A number of children have been involved in the development process, although only two young people's parents consented for them to be filmed. Children were involved throughout the whole process and everyone working on the project wants to achieve the same goal. Children listed a number of items that they were interested in including in the app, such as specific information about what social workers do, how to cope with having a parent in prison. There were also requests for a private diary space and a space to share with others using the app. Currently in a test phase, the evaluation of the prototype will inform the development of the app.

The Ethical Dilemma - Ann Adalist-Estrin, Rutgers University, USA

Ann Adalist-Estrin is the Director of the National Resource Centre on Children and Families of the Incarcerated at Rutgers University. Ann began her presentation with a reference to the current shift in the deep break system, which involved sentencing people as far away from their families as possible. Support for children and families of the incarcerated has moved lightyears; they are becoming more and more visible. State governments, county and local perspectives are focusing more and more on the need of children and families with imprisoned family members.

Ann placed special emphasis on the importance of knowing one's own perspectives and being aware of the lenses one is wearing when engaging with children and families of the imprisoned. Ethics begin with understanding what we believe; we are always identifying with someone. Technology has a strong influence on individual perspective, as we are simultaneously subjected to many points of view and expected to back up our perspectives. Ann spoke of the dilemma of inclusivity, and how important it is to always include children and families of prisoners; they should be considered experts and so consulted as experts in decisions that affect them. While they share in their parent's experiences, children experience their parent's imprisonment in myriad ways. Ann encouraged participants to always be mindful of the need for emotional support as children share their stories and highlighted that child wellbeing should always be the core reason to provide support, NOT preventing intergenerational incarceration.

Ann went on to speak to the context specific to the U.S., where half of children with imprisoned parents in the US are under 8 years old—it is a constant challenge to ensure their voices are heard—and an overwhelming majority are African American or of Latin American descent. In the U.S. it's 80 percent a question of race, which affects how professionals approach working with prisoners and their families.

Ann touched on a range of elements to keep in mind when completing research, what she terms 'the dilemma of research interpretation.' She emphasised that when citing studies and other research material, the dates of publications matter. When reading research, one should always ask 'Why might this be true?'

It's important to keep in mind that parental incarceration is considered an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE), traumatic experiences that can significantly affect a child's wellbeing; ACEs cause problems with cortisol, which leads to behavioural issues. Spending time with parents, on the other hand, can have positive effects, as dopamine can come from spending time with parents. ACEs also interact and compound; children in foster care are at a greater risk of being incarcerated than children with imprisoned parents.

Addressing the issue for children with imprisoned parents needs to take place from within the justice system, from arrest to resettlement. Being incarcerated doesn't mean letting go of being a parent. It does, however, necessitate an approach that takes place on a human scale. Honouring the 'protective factors,' as Ann calls them—human connection, personal skills, bonds with an adult—are important for children to maintain emotional competence and build resiliency. Many of these kids are faring well with support, but they have massive amounts of pain that professionals can help with. This starts by asking questions like, 'Why might visits be traumatic?'

It means also that parents need to be honoured and respected as parents with a role in their child's life. The sense of responsibility that comes with performing that role as parent has been linked to reduced rates of recidivism. Our technological age is redefining the concept of "Face to Face" connection; parents and children can more easily connect, but Skype chats and video calls should not take the place of physical contact.

The dilemma of service delivery is in providing relevant support to children. Counselling should only be offered to children if it includes relevant support. If counsellors or other professionals focus a program on children with imprisoned parents, those children should know the reason why they are there. And, as always, at all costs, children of prisoners should not be identified by the deeds of their parents. This only contributes to the production of shame and stigma. In the

way of media presentation, Ann emphasised the urgency of challenging media portrayals of children with imprisoned parents. The frame needs to be shifted at the level of discourse; stop talking about the intergenerational cycle and start focusing on child wellbeing.

Ann's final words in this program were two principles: first, if you build it they will come, referring to the importance of programs centred on working with children of imprisoned parents. Her last principle: collaborate!

Forum on Media: Changing the Atmosphere

Chaired by Dr Jim Dobson, Manchester Metropolitan University

Dr Jim Dobson currently lectures at Manchester Metropolitan University after working as a Policy and Research Officer and a Project Manager for a Local Authority Children's Services Department, which brought him into close work with criminal justice agencies, social services and the voluntary sector.

Edoardo Fleischner, co-founder of Bambinisenzabarre, has a background as a journalist and editor, and as such lectures in cross-media communication and language in Milan. In his classes he gives his students a very long article on international finance, and they work to transform it into different types of media—a radio program, a musical, a video game, an app—and to consider the companies and web-broadcasters involved in the media.

Clare Fordham, Assistant Editor at BBC Radio 5 live, is working on a general media agenda to address the portrayal of children with imprisoned parents.

Maja Gabelica Supljika, Croatia's Deputy Ombudswoman for Children, is in contact with media, answering questions about particular cases. In the way of media, she focuses on how to use the media in promoting and advocating for children's rights.

Jim led the conversation by touching upon the diversity of media content and the many forms that that media takes. He noted the tendency to report around crime in a sensationalist manner, and that many families wouldn't even tell other family members if someone was incarcerated (based on his own research findings). How, he asked, can the media work to generate stories that aren't so sensationalist?

Edoardo responded by describing the Italian context. In some parts of Italy the names of children with imprisoned parents are published, which has negative

effects. On the other hand, there are news shows with very impressive news. When it comes to the child's interaction with media, it is incredibly important that the children learn the truth about their parents from either the parent or a very close confidant, as opposed to from the media, which can easily happen, especially in high profile cases.

Clare noted that the media has no sympathy for the prisoner; the focus is always on the victim. From a media standpoint, it is important that positive stories are told, not just sensationalist messages of crime and imprisonment. Reporting on good programs that provide support for prisoners and families is important.

Maja, coming from the perspective of a politician, uses different techniques to try to raise their empathy and sympathy of journalists and media workers. There are journalists who are very aware of the issues, including a radio host who does a lot of awareness raising. 10 years ago in Croatia, journalists could enter the prisons and speak with prisoners, during which time this radio host interviewed imprisoned mothers about their relationship with their children. But eventually the prisons decided to disallow entrance into prisons freely, and it is, accordingly, hard to know which journalists to allow into prisons when the option arises.

Clare added that there is an organisation called Person Shaped Support in Liverpool, where the voices of children were highlighted. Part of the success that this program had was the lack of government involvement in the process. Access, knowledge and awareness are key.

When children speak with journalists, in Edoardo's experience, the messages from children promote different reactions. And likewise, the stories that come out are completely different—and the child's comportment changes—as opposed to when children are speaking with social workers or caregivers.

In discussing the media's right to information—and the individual's right to privacy—Jim contrasted the European system with an American system that allows greater access to information. He asked the panelists what can be done to work with the press and encourage them to be more sensitive and responsible with work like this.

Clare found that the children of prisoners are often very much targeted by media. It's therefore important for journalists and others working in media to think about the information that's gathered and how it's used. Why are we putting it out there? What work does that information do? What perspectives does it enforce or eliminate?

Maja: It is a disaster for children to read about what their parent did. It is very dangerous to the wellbeing of the child.

For Edoardo, this issue is fundamentally a question of truth, specifically how the child learns the truth of his or her parent's detainment or imprisonment. The parent has to communicate to their child why they are not there. There is an idea that he got from a science fiction piece, which suggests that 72 hours after arrest, the convicted has to meet their children to tell them what has happened.

Maja suggested collaboration should occur between those working in media and those working in politics, advocacy, social services, and as caregivers. In her words, "We could meet the media people to tell them about the consequences of what they are publishing."

In closing the panel, Clare reasserted the profound opportunity to be found in journalism that covers positive stories about children of imprisoned parents and programs that support them. Case stories—the narrative of lives—are the best way to present a case.

Closing Remarks

Lucy Gampell OBE - Children of Prisoners Europe

COPE president Lucy Gampell closed the 2018 conference by noting that, although the provision of family services and promotion of rights-based social support for children of prisoners is difficult, certainly in the UK during a period of tumult, events like the conference at hand does much to lift spirits and inspire those committed to child's rights. She emphasised the vast possibility of creative ways to work with families and children of the imprisoned, and that international collaboration of the sort displayed at the conference invigorates individuals and organisations to create change.

With a note of finality, Lucy leaned again upon the subject of inclusivity: "Nothing about us, without us": "Think of these children as you would your own".



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Children of Prisoners Europe (COPE) is a pan-European network of non-profit organisations working on behalf of children separated from an imprisoned parent. The network encourages innovative perspectives and practices to ensure that children with an imprisoned parent fully enjoy their rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and that action is taken to enable their well-being and development.

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