

# Webinar

## **Collaborative solutions: how schools and prisons can join hands to support children with imprisoned parents**

*Widening Professional Perspectives for Effective Solutions*

**Monday 25 November | 14.30 – 16.00 CET | 13.30 – 15.00 GMT | Zoom**

### **Introduction**

Effective support for children impacted by a parent's imprisonment requires the collective effort and awareness of many stakeholders, including police, prison and probation services, courts, schools, civil society, social services and health providers. COPE invites you to an upcoming webinar on the roles of two groups — **school staff and prison professionals** — and how they can collaboratively work to strengthen and maintain child-parent bonds when a parent is in prison. A young person whose parent was imprisoned will bring her expertise to the webinar, rooting discussions in the voice of experience.

**Practitioners and policy makers in education and criminal justice** are invited to this cross-border discussion where child rights-based actions and ideas will be presented. For example, a champion model that works across prisons and schools, promoting partnership and providing consistent support for children across agencies. Participants will be offered resources and useful tools, such as templates for cross-sectoral collaboration and models for local roundtable events.

### **When and Where**

The webinar will be held via Zoom on Monday 25 November 2024, 14.30 – 16.00 CET (13.30 – 15.00 GMT)

The webinar is free of charge. It will be held in English.

### **Registration**

Please register for the [webinar on Eventbrite here](#).

### **Who should attend**

This event is open to all who are interested and especially those working in education and criminal justice sectors, both practitioners and policy makers. The webinar offers a platform to share and explore cross-border ideas and will draw on international practice.

## Speakers

- **Young person impacted by a parent’s imprisonment**
- **Sarah Beresford, Prison Reform Trust Associate and Churchill Fellow**  
A former secondary school teacher and Family Support Manager at [Families Outside](#), Sarah has worked for over a decade to engage schools in supporting families and children with imprisoned parents. She established an in-prison training programme to increase teachers’ awareness of the impact of imprisonment on families and has co-developed, with young people, a [child impact assessment tool](#) to ensure children impacted by parental imprisonment are listened to, supported, and included in decisions made about them
- **Polly Wright, Independent children & families research, practice & police expert**  
Polly Wright has 20 years of experience in children and family sectors, notably in project management, research and development. She has chaired and participated in local and national strategy groups to develop multi-agency responses to supporting the children of prisoners, and developed and delivered training to practitioners across education, social care, policing and the prison service to develop knowledge and awareness about parental imprisonment.

*Polly and Sarah have both been working on a 12-month scoping project for the Welsh Government to develop recommendations for a national model to improve wellbeing and educational outcomes for children affected by parental imprisonment.*

## Draft Agenda

Time	
14.30	Welcome by webinar facilitators: Sarah Beresford & Polly Wright
14.40	Overview of the impact of parental imprisonment
14.50	What needs to change for children who have a parent in prison — a young person’s perspective
15.00	Why cross-sectoral solutions are key to protecting child rights — where policy meets practice
15.15	Examples of school-prisons initiatives: models to be replicated
15.55	Conclusion: a vision for children with a parent in prison — a young person’s perspective

## Background

Children with imprisoned parents often experience a complex and conflicting set of emotional, physical and social challenges. On top of the difficulty of parental separation, many experience a combination of guilt, shame, anxiety, fear, anger and isolation. Children often cite stigma and judgement surrounding a parent's prison sentence as the most debilitating factor, preventing them from asking for and accessing support. Visiting a parent in prison can be intimidating or stressful; some children do not visit their parent in detention for many reasons — financial barriers may get in the way, children may not have an adult who can accompany them.

[The Council of Europe \(2018\) recommended to member States](#) that children with imprisoned parents be treated with respect for their human rights and with due regard for their situation and needs. The Recommendation states that children's views should be heard, directly or indirectly, in relation to decisions which may affect them. Both schools and prisons play an important role in upholding children's rights, for example: prison guards ensuring children feel safe and respected during visits; schools sharing information (e.g. school reports) with parents in prison; and prison and school staff working together to support parent-child relationships through in-prison homework clubs and parent-teacher meetings. When prisons and schools work collaboratively, prison walls become more permeable to family life: parents in prison can engage more actively in their children's education through the help of schools, who in turn gain better insight into the challenges children face and how they can help. An **integrated approach to child protection** is key, as underscored by the [European Commission's Recommendation](#) launched April 2024. COPE's webinar is framed by this Recommendation which seeks to foster coordinated, multi-disciplinary responses as promoted by the Commission.

### Children of Prisoners Europe (COPE)

COPE is an EU-funded network working with and for the estimated 2.1 million children with a parent in prison in Europe. With its 140 organisations and individuals across 31 Council of Europe countries (and affiliates outside Europe), COPE prevents and responds to violations of the rights of children with a parent or family member in prison, while improving standards and policies to prevent and respond to these violations. COPE's work is further elaborated in the [COPE Principles](#).



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