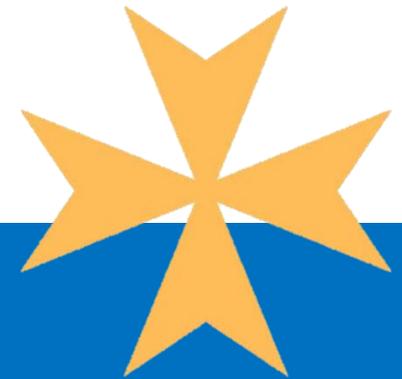


Stigma dismantled, dignity upheld

Child rights standards for children affected by parental imprisonment

Caritas Malta Community Centre, 12 June 2025



Challenging The Secret Sentence

Tasha Cowperthwaite, Firebird Foundation Parental Imprisonment Lead
And PIC members, Evie Mae and Jemmar.



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Parental Imprisonment Collective

Challenging The Secret Sentence



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Who is PIC?

“We are a group of young adults with lived experience of parental imprisonment during childhood, standing united against the dehumanisation of children who have experienced or continuing to experience a parent(s) in prison.

We affirm the equal value of our dual identities, both professional and lived to create change.

With deep care and kindness, we aim to tackle some of the complex issues and barriers these young people face. By gifting society a better understanding of what it is to be a child of an imprisoned parent, we hope to energise the change around stigma towards these children and young people, providing the support they deserve.”



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PIC

PIC Parental
Imprisonment
Collective

CHALLENGING
THE SECRET
SENTENCE

The Challenges faced by Children
Whose Parents are Imprisoned

May 2025

DIC

WE HAVE LAUNCHED OUR FIRST PAPER

*The Challenges faced by Children
Whose Parents are Imprisoned*

Supported by Dr Shona Minson

Powered by



parentalimprisonmentcollective.co.uk



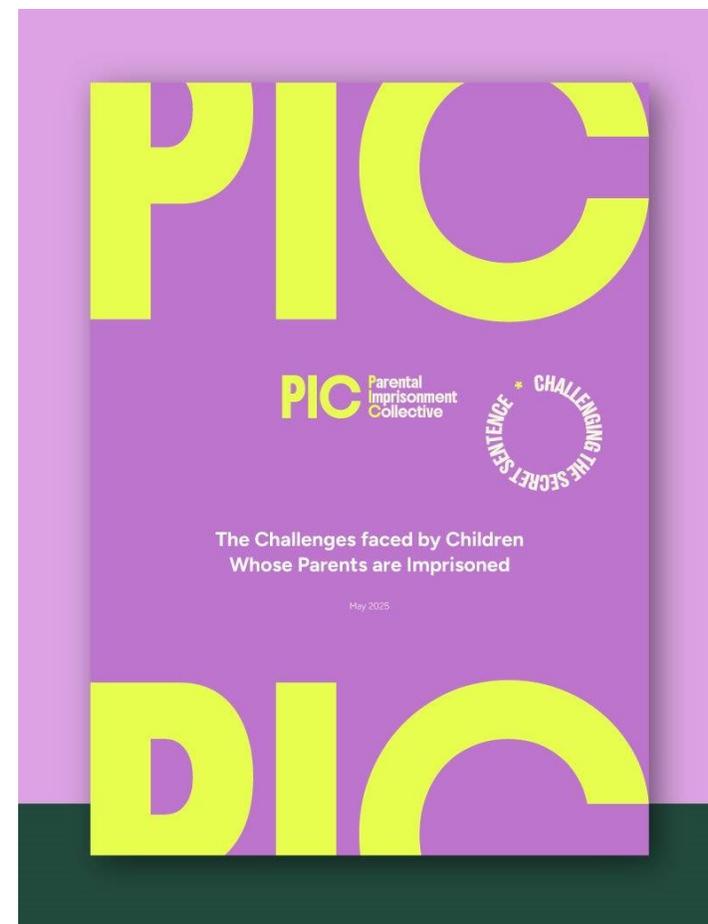
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What we are up against

- Health Impacts
- Education
- Poverty
- Stigma



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The UK Labour Government Manifesto 2024:

'Children who have experienced parental imprisonment are at an increased risk of poor mental health & educational outcomes. They also face reduced access to life enriching opportunities. **We will ensure that these young people are offered support when they ask for it, to equip them with the right tools to thrive, and not just survive.'**



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'Children who have experienced parental imprisonment are at an increased risk of poor mental health & educational outcomes. They also face reduced access to life enriching opportunities. We will ensure that these young people are offered support when they ask for it, to equip them with the right tools to thrive, and not just survive.'



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What it actually said...

'The children of those who are imprisoned are at far greater risk of being drawn into crime than their peers.'

We will ensure that those young people are identified and offered support to break the cycle.'



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Dear UK Government,

We are **not a number.**



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What does the research say & how does it affect us?

- ~~The Cambridge Study of Delinquent Development 1953~~
- Targeting services specifically to children of prisoners based on perceptions that they may be 'at risk' of future criminal behaviour has **unintended negative consequences by making children feel labelled (Kincaid, Roberts and Kane, 2019).**



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Adultification

“I was doing the shopping, cooking and cleaning. I had no choice.”

(Male, age 26)



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Stigma

“When you have this situation at home, you don’t really want to let everyone else know about it ... you just naturally learn not to tell people. You just get used to telling lies, like ‘white lies’ you could call them, and hide the fact that your dad is away in prison...”

(Female, age 18)



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Grief

"My life completely changed just through one phone call... it's just like your dad is being ripped away from your home, but he's still there... I have always been a daddy's girl, always will be... I didn't have a sibling to confide in and didn't know anyone in my situation."

(Female, age 21)



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Dear Policy Makers

- Innocent Until Proven Guilty
- Parental Imprisonment is not a virus
- The stigma and impact can be lifelong
- False narratives of future offending
- Words matter – internalise the responsibility
- No two families are the same



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Our Recommendations

- Narrative Change Strategy
- Lived Experience at the Centre
- Person-Centred, Wrap-Around Support
- Consistent National Processes
- Stigma-Free Language



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Practical Actions

- Sentencing - Courts must consider children's needs
- Mental Health - Support to help children thrive—not just cope
- Education - Offer flexibility and understanding
- Finance - Offer financial aid and provisions



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Let's Connect!

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Thank you!

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