Young Parents
From Custody to Community
A Guide to Policy and Practice
plus DVD with 2 short films
Joanne Sherlock
The work of the Prison Reform Trust is aimed at creating a just, humane and effective penal system. We do this by inquiring into the workings of the system; informing prisoners, staff and the wider public; and by influencing Parliament, Government and officials towards reform.

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Young Parents
From Custody to Community
A Guide to Policy and Practice

Joanne Sherlock
Being inside a prison is hard for a visitor, let alone for an inmate. My memories of recent visits are of drained prisoners talking about their concerns, regrets, and troubled life. It is also of committed but hard-pressed prison staff trying to cope with prisoners with drug or drink problems, prisoners suffering from a whole range of mental health problems and those full of self-loathing and despair. This hopelessness is never greater than in young prisoners, and particular women, separated from their children.

The scale of the problem is far greater than many people would imagine. The Prison Reform Trust has estimated the number of children separated from their mothers at more than 17,700. As many as seven per cent of primary school children may have a father in prison. This has to be an estimate because, surprisingly, figures are not yet routinely collected on the number of parents in prison. But these figures reveal just how devastating a custodial sentence can be to so many families.

The particular problems posed by the increasing numbers of young mothers and the high proportion of young fathers in custody is a subject close to my heart: both as a mother myself and as someone who in a judicial capacity has the heavy responsibility of sometimes handing down prison sentences.

I am not suggesting that we treat young mums and dads with kid gloves. Young people who offend must be called to account and pay for what they have done. And that must mean prison for those who commit serious crimes or are a danger to the community. But it does mean in other cases we should also examine closely whether there is a better alternative, for society and the individuals concerned and their families, to imprisonment which too often worsens rather than tackles problems.

Support for this approach is increasing. The Government, judiciary, and the voluntary sector, are cooperating more than ever before in exploring innovative and cost-effective means of punishing offenders. These alternatives to custody are proving that there can be far better ways of preventing re-offending, whilst at the same time minimising the most harmful effects on vulnerable young parents and their children.

For those whose offending is so serious that there can be no alternative to custody, every effort must be made to help families keep in touch. Home Office research has shown that maintaining good family ties can reduce a prisoner’s risk of re-offending by six times. This is, of course, made much more difficult if prisoners are kept far from home and the support they will need on release. We must also do more to improve facilities for family visits. I welcome the innovative work now underway in our prisons to tackle this problem with schemes, for example, offering supervised play for children during visits.

I am also pleased to see the creation of specialist family centres to offer help. For families left on the outside experience their own difficulties. It is not easy to ask for help. People will not readily identify themselves as prisoners’ families to teachers, health care professionals or to social workers for fear that their children might be taken into care or that the information might not be treated sensitively or confidentially. Often families simply do not know about sources of help available to them.

I welcome this timely guide to policy and practice. It highlights examples of good work already underway with young parents in custody and in the community. It also looks at new solutions and ways in which different agencies can work together to support vulnerable families. When we consider that almost half of all young prisoners themselves were in care as children and many more lacked a stable family life, it highlights how important action is now to avoid bigger problems in the future. We need to make sure that today’s sons and daughters of prisoners don’t end up tomorrow’s offenders.

Cherie Booth QC
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**Researchers**
Lesley Dixon
Martin Glynn
Dr Nancy Loucks
Anthony Simpson

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**The Young Parents**
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contributed throughout. Finally, Wendy Armour from the Case Study Project at Staffordshire Probation Service, who put us in touch with young parents who contributed to our conferences and videos and told their stories for this report.

**Abbreviations used in this report:**

- BME: Black, Minority Ethnic (groups)
- CJS: Criminal Justice System
- DfES: Department for Education and Skills
- FCDO: Family Contact Development Officer
- HO: Home Office
- MBU: Mother and Baby Unit
- NOMS: National Offender Management Service
- PRT: Prison Reform Trust
- STC: Secure Training Centre
- SEU: Social Exclusion Unit
- TPU: Teenage Pregnancy Unit
- YJB: Youth Justice Board
- YJS: Youth Justice System
- Yot: Youth Offending Team
- YPP: Young Parents in Prison Project
- YOI: Young Offender Institution
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The Case Studies - The establishments above took part in research focus groups over an eighteen month period. Staff implemented a range of improvements at each site. These case studies document the process of change.
**BACKGROUND**

In 2001 the Prison Reform Trust initiated a three-year programme of work entitled ‘Young Parents in Prison’. Its remit was to review current practice and policy for young parents aged between 15-25 involved in the criminal justice system in the UK, focusing in particular on those in custody. However, many of our findings will be relevant to those working with parents of any age. The overriding aim of the project was to gain a greater understanding of how the needs of young parents can be met, both in the community and in custody, and how appropriate support can be provided on release. This policy and practice guide has been produced to inform and support all those working with, or concerned about, young parents who offend.

PRT’s objectives were to:

- Focus particularly on the needs of young parents from black and minority ethnic groups.
- Promote alternatives to custody, wherever possible for young parents who offend
- Improve contact between young parents in custody and their families outside and integrate support for them.
- Extend opportunities for support for young parents on release from custody
- Ensure that young offenders who are parents are actively involved in the development and evaluation of support services.

We aimed to do this through developing an extensive programme of:

- Research in prisons and surveys in the wider criminal justice system
- Campaigning and parliamentary lobbying, including placing Parliamentary Questions on key issues for young parents and families involved with the CJS and entering into a dialogue with policy-makers
- Raising the profile of the needs of this group of young parents through extensive national and local media coverage
- Running two national conferences looking at the different needs of young mothers and fathers and contributing to key events on young parents in the CJS including the Parenting and Family Learning National Conference organised by OLSU, the Teenage Pregnancy Unit conference, Father’s Direct conference, Kids VIP and CLINKS conferences.

At the beginning of this project, the needs of young parents involved in the CJS were low on the political and social agenda. We believe that during the course of this work there has been a shift, particularly among child and family services. At the same time during 2004 there have been significant structural changes in the statutory provision of family services as well as the creation of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), which will bring together the National Probation Service and the Prison Service. Most significantly, two recent Government papers ‘Every Child Matters’ (DfES, 2003) and ‘The Child Poverty Review’ (HM Treasury, 2004) have both highlighted the needs of imprisoned parents’ children. In the next chapter we reflect on changes in the policy context and provide an overview of new developments. In the current climate, there is considerable potential to address the needs of young parents who offend and their families.

**WHY DO YOUNG PARENTS IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM NEED SUPPORT?**

For some time, the Prison Reform Trust has been concerned about the number of young parents in prison, and the level and appropriateness of support provided for this group. A large number of young offenders in custody are parents:
Young men in prison are:

- six times more likely to be fathers than those in the general population
- less likely than young men in the general population to be in stable relationships
- more likely to have suffered relationship or family breakdown
- much more likely to be teenage or single parents (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002).

Statistics on the actual numbers of young parents in custody are not available, as this information is not routinely or centrally collected. Home Office research has found that 66 per cent of all female prisoners are mothers. Each year it is estimated that more than 17,700 children are separated from their mother by imprisonment. Just five per cent of women prisoners’ children remain in their own home once their mother has been sentenced (Hamlyn, B & Lewis, D, 2000). It is estimated that 150,000 children have a parent in prison at any one time. Seven per cent of children at school at any one time have a father in prison (Dfes, 2003). The number of men in prison with dependent children is estimated at 59 per cent (Hamlyn, B & Lewis D, 2000). In reality, this figure is likely to be higher. There are other factors which make this group important:

- **Inter-generational effect**
  A strong inter-generational effect has been identified. No research has yet been carried out to assess whether the children of young parents are more likely to be involved in criminal activity. However, one of the single biggest factors which influences the likelihood of offending is having a family member who is or has been an offender. The 1991 National Prison Survey found that 43 percent of convicted prisoners had a family member who was an ex-offender. Compared with the general population, prisoners are two and half times more likely to have had a family member convicted of a criminal offence (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002). If effective interventions are implemented to support young parents the likelihood of offending should be reduced and, in the long-term, the inter-generational effect reduced significantly. Supporting young parents to avoid re-offending and to become the good parents most want to be is one of the most effective ways of breaking the cycle of crime.

- **Preventing and reducing re-offending**
  Supporting young parents in custody is also an issue of public safety and preventing re-offending. Fathers maintaining family ties whilst in prison are six times less likely to re-offend on release (Home Office, 2002a). Re-offending rates are particularly high for young people. Almost three quarters of young prisoners aged 18-20, and over 80 per cent of those under 18, re-offend within two years of release.

- **The imprisonment of parents damages children**
  There is evidence that involvement with the CJS, and particularly imprisonment, can have a long-term effect on children. Childcare policy in England and Wales is based on the premise that uninterrupted contact with both parents is beneficial to stable child development. So far there is no evidence to suggest that this is any different for the children of imprisoned parents (Boswell, G & Wedge, P, 2003). In fact, research shows that many children are traumatised by parental imprisonment. Prisoners’ families often experience increased financial, housing, emotional and mental health problems during a sentence. Thirty per cent of prisoners’ children suffer significant mental problems, compared with 10 per cent of the general population (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002).

- **The impact of teenage pregnancy**
  Although this report is focusing on young parents who offend, there are a range of issues specific to teenage parents in the community that need to be taken into consideration.
KEY FACTS - TEENAGE PREGNANCY:

The UK has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in Europe (Social Exclusion Unit, 1999). There are more young parents in the poorest areas in the UK and among the most vulnerable young people, including those in care and those who have been excluded from school.

- 90 per cent of teenage mothers have their babies outside marriage, and relationships started in teenage years have at least 50 per cent chance of breaking down.
- Teenage parents are more likely than their peers to live in poverty and unemployment and be trapped in it through lack of education, childcare and encouragement.

(Teenage Pregnancy Strategy, Social Exclusion Unit, 1999).

The report on teenage pregnancy produced by the Social Exclusion Unit, which led to the development of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy (Social Exclusion Unit, 1999), identified several factors which made teenage pregnancy more likely including poverty, being in care, being a child of a teenage mother themselves, and experiencing educational and mental health problems. The report also highlighted the links between teenage pregnancy and crime:

‘There is an association between involvement with the police and teenage parenthood. Studies of the 1958 UK birth cohort identified that teenage girls and boys who had been in trouble with the police had twice the risk of becoming a teenage parent than those who had no contact.’ (Cited in Social Exclusion Unit, 1999).

This finding would go some way to explaining the large number of young parents found in young offender institutions. The report also suggests that the multiple risk factors may also explain the over-representation of some minority ethnic groups amongst teenage parents:

‘The link between disadvantage and early parenthood will also impact disproportionately on ethnic minority groups. For example 41% of African Caribbean, 82% of Pakistani and 84% of Bangladeshi people have incomes less than half the national average. People from some ethnic minority groups are disproportionately likely to be in the acute risk groups i.e. in the care system or excluded from school.’ (Social Exclusion Unit, 1999).

The report also found that these teenage parents are unlikely to use support services available, and that there is a barrier to receiving information, particularly among disadvantaged young parents. A study undertaken by Greg Ross Dawson in 1999 (Cited in Henricson, 2002c) of socially excluded young mothers found resistance to the idea of parenting being taught, especially through books. However, this may be explained by the fact that some parents were not functionally literate and others found this approach unacceptable.

The National Family and Parenting Institute MORI survey of parents in the general population (as cited in Henricson, 2000d) corroborated some of these findings and found family and friends (60 per cent) were the most highly valued source of information. Considerable resistance to Government generated information was also highlighted. Most significantly, studies have repeatedly found that young people have poor relationships with health professionals (Henricson, 2001c). The National Family and Parenting Institute has also identified this problem (as cited in Page, 2002) and found that parents were unclear about which professionals could offer help and how. The parents in their study wanted to be
able to build a relationship with one professional over a period of time rather than see different people and have to repeat questions to different professionals. Despite increase in provision, the NFPI survey found that most services are not available to all families:

‘Services designed to help families before they reach crisis point are in short supply and there is particularly limited support for ethnic families and fathers. The responses also suggest that that the work of midwives, health visitors and school nurses should be integrated and that multi-disciplinary teams should operate from health centres to provide a single, recognisable source of information on parenting.’ (Cited in Page, 2002).

Young parents in particular have difficulties in forming relationships with those who work in statutory services such as health visitors and midwives and fear being judged and stigmatised when seeking support. They feel that they are not listened to. There would appear to be a mismatch between young parent’s needs and the services designed to meet their needs.

‘A strong message from the research into parent’s views is that parents want to be acknowledged as agents of their own lives and active agents who must be listened to and involved in planning services.’ (Page, 2002)

These issues are particularly relevant to this research programme. One of our overriding aims was to ensure that appropriate community support for young parents was available after release. During the course of our research we asked young parents what services they had used prior to custody and most were unable to identify what was available in the community:

‘If all these things are there but if you don’t know about them how can you use them? So Miss, how would we know about this stuff? If you don’t know about it how can we use them?’ (Young fathers in custody)

However, the majority of young parents stated that they would welcome support. This raises questions about how these services are formulated and promoted and how they are accessed by young parents:

‘Any extra help. People would be happy to take it; no one wants to go through this struggle.’ (Young mother in custody)

KEY ISSUES FOR YOUNG PARENTS IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

A Home Office study (Lyon et al 2001) which examined young peoples’ experiences of custody and their hopes and plans for the future found that most tried to maintain family ties whilst in custody. These ties mattered to them regardless of their own experiences. Most young people saw parenting and the role of the family as important.

Being a parent was regarded as a primary reason to stop offending. However, young people themselves acknowledged that they needed help to overcome some of the difficulties they faced. They also expressed a desire for a decent life and future including good housing, employment and opportunities for education. A follow-up study on young offender fathers (Dennison C and Lyon J 2003) also found that the young dads they interviewed expressed a desire to be the ‘best dads that they could be’. This report then focused on how young people can be helped to achieve their aspirations, particularly in the light of the fact that most young people in custody have had unsatisfactory relationships with professional adults and services and that their awareness of outside agencies and support is low.
The experience of incarceration is very different for young mothers. This is because women are nearly always the primary carer and often single mothers prior to custody. Therefore the major challenge for women is how to make sure their children will be looked after. Men, on the other hand, generally serve a sentence in the knowledge that their partners will care for their children. A Home Office study (Caddle, D, 1997) concluded that ‘imprisoned mothers are in a sense doubly penalized – they are serving a sentence and at the same time they are trying to make provision for their children’. Combined with this women are more likely to split up with their partner whilst in custody and are at greater risk than male counterparts of experiencing mental health problems, particularly depression. The post-release problems for women are also numerous. Therefore the research identified very distinct support needs for young mothers in comparison to young fathers.

The project also focused on identifying support needs for minority ethnic parents who have traditionally been less likely to be involved in parenting or support initiatives in custody and the community. The National Mapping exercise (Henricson, 2001c) found that ‘Less than 2 per cent of services are targeted specifically at minority ethnic groups’. Therefore the research sought to identify these needs and develop interventions that appeal to non-white backgrounds, which are flexible and seen as relevant to lifestyle and culture. Existing services do not appear to respond well to the needs of these young parents.

THE RESEARCH

The overall aim of the research was to identify the information and support needs of young parents in the CJS and how these needs can best be met. It consisted of:

a) a scoping study of existing research
b) a policy review on young parents
c) UK-wide identification of examples of good practice through a number of site visits
d) action research: in seven custodial settings with young parents, their friends and families and prison staff.

Prison sites were selected because they included a mixture of the following factors; they were geographically spread across the UK, covered the age range 15-25, included both male and female establishments, included some establishments with mother and baby units and included sites that were already running either a parenting course or that had some innovative family work programmes underway.


Research Approach:

The action research was not intended or designed as a rigorously based statistical evaluation rather it was meant as an information gathering exercise about developments at selected establishments to inform practice elsewhere.

The research approach was ‘user-led’, i.e. it was based on a model where offenders’ views and ideas could act as a lever for change and improvement. This approach ensures that the resources and support services developed are addressing young parents’ needs as they define them. In turn young people will be more likely to engage or re-engage with the support offered.
The Research Process:
Focus groups took place on each site with young parents, their friends, family and staff involved at four stages over an eighteen-month period. All participants were volunteers.

The main aim of the first focus groups was to explore perceptions of current provision both in the community and in custody and to find out more about young parents' needs. The groups also explored young parents' perceptions and preferences in relation to their information and support needs, with a view to enhance provision. Topic guides were provided for the different groups. The staff focus groups looked at feedback from the prisoner groups as well as gaining their views on improving service provision. These discussions led to the development of action plans through which realistic solutions were sought or discussion took place on what new measures could be introduced.

For example, it was anticipated that young parents would have support needs that could be met by outside organisations. Previously identified national organisations such as Sure Start and other child and family services could be brought in to the sites. It was planned that the focus group with all parties should then be repeated over a period of time and improvements in service provision for young parents on these sites measured.

However, in practice, the action research programme was carried out at a time of tremendous overcrowding in the prison system. This context made it difficult to carry out the research. Family contact work is low priority in comparison to security. This was very apparent in some establishments where it was difficult to gain repeated access to hold these focus groups due to staff pressures. It was also hard to involve outside organisations at the sites mainly due to operational procedures and bureaucracy. Therefore, on four sites this process was implemented as planned, but on the other sites we held focus groups and ad hoc interviews with young parents as and when we were able to. Findings from all seven sites are included in chapters four to eight. The four sites that implemented change are also included as case studies and the change process documented. (See Appendix 3 for case studies on HM Prison Cornton Vale, HM YOI Hydebank Wood, HM YOI Polmont and HM YOI Deerbolt).

During the course of the project we often came across individuals or small teams of staff doing their best in very difficult circumstances. But although there were many examples of excellent initiatives, overall there was a worrying lack of focus on the needs of parents and families and an absence of an integrated approach to family work.

e) Surveys:
Two surveys were undertaken with both Yots and National Probation Services to find out what support they currently provide to young parents and to examine ways in which they could increase support to this group. The Yots survey was carried out by PRT and the National Probation Survey commissioned to the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies. It also included follow up interviews and panel discussions with key probation personnel to explore further their work with young parents. The practitioners on the panel were closely connected to leading national exemplars of partnership working designed to offer greater support to parents and families in the criminal justice system.

f) Conference proceedings:
As part of the project two major national conferences were held to raise awareness and contribute to identifying examples of good practice. As the available literature and knowledge in our subject area was limited, the proceedings of, and ideas from, this conference are heavily drawn upon in this resource, particularly in identifying good practice:


g) European research:
EUROCHIPS is a significant new organisation working from France to collate and share research and practice on imprisoned parents. A PRT researcher had two meetings in France and Brussels to find out about their work. (Meetings were held in Paris 14 April 2003 and Brussels on 11th June 2003.)

h) Research with BME (black, minority ethnic) young fathers
One of the key objectives of the YPP project was to address the particular needs of black and minority ethnic fathers who are over represented in the CJS. However, it became apparent that there were very few courses either in prisons or in the community that were designed to meet the needs of different ethnic groups or that were culturally specific. To begin to address this gap we commissioned Martin Glynn, Director of B.L.A.K to conduct a specific piece of research in HM YOI Deerbolt to explore the needs of black young fathers in custody, and plan the design of an appropriate parenting intervention. We acknowledge that further work needs to be done to address the needs of women from minority ethnic groups. However, we believe this piece of research contributes to the debate on the value of designing culturally specific interventions.

i) Research leading to the production of film material
Interviews were conducted with young parents in the criminal justice system and ex-offenders to determine the key points that film material could illustrate. The films were a way to enable young parents to express their concerns directly to policymakers and practitioners.

j) Films
Young Mothers from Custody to Community film (2004). Dawson Films and PRT.

Overview of the film:
A powerful independent documentary film looking at three young mothers’ experiences in the CJS. The film features three interviews with young mothers and with one of their children. It shows how they coped during and after a prison sentence and portrays the experience of a mother placed on a Community Order. They reflect on what could have been done to make the experience easier to cope with and offer advice to others in similar situations. The interviews:

Kerrie -
Kerrie was remanded in custody for approximately eight months. Kerrie describes what it is like being pregnant in custody, her worries and concerns for the future of her child and the lack of support that was available to her in prison, and offers advice to others in a similar situation. Following her remand in custody, Kerrie was placed on licence in the community. The judge at the Crown Court took account of her situation and supported her residency in a mother and baby hostel, she appeared in court one month later so that the judge could check all was well. Kerrie is supervised and supported in the community by Staffordshire Probation Services. Since this experience Kerrie gave birth to and kept her baby. She has become involved in dance and gave a public performance in June 2004.

Hannah -
Hannah was arrested (for drugs offences) in front of her eleven-year-old daughter. Her daughter was placed in the care of a family member and later moved to a different family member. Hannah describes what it was like at the time of arrest for both her and her daughter. Hannah received a Drug Treatment and Testing Order and was kept out of prison. Her daughter was placed on a Care Order. During this Order Hannah was given support for de-tox and was allowed contact with her daughter. Hannah was supervised and supported by Staffordshire Probation Services. Since this experience Hannah has been reunited with her daughter and has been doing education and training work through the Probation Service and she plans to enrol on a media course at a local college. (Hannah’s full story in her own words is included in Chapter 3 – ‘Support in the Community and Alternatives to Custody’).
Suzy –
Suzy was arrested when her daughter Leticia was eight years old. She served two-and-a-half years in custody. Suzy and her daughter talk about how they coped and about their experience from the night of arrest through to the end of the sentence and beyond. They focus on how they kept in touch and the trauma of visits. Leticia lived in a variety of hostel accommodation while her mother was in prison. She reflects on how this and the separation from her mother affected her behaviour at school. Since release Suzy has been doing a community theatre access course with Clean Break and has been offered work as a stage manager. Suzy is planning to apply to drama school and university.

Young Fathers from Custody to Community film (2004). Relate and the PRT.

Overview of the film:
An inspirational film looking at how young fathers, their children and their partners cope during and after a father's prison sentence. This video was produced in partnership with Relate, who have been delivering a range of courses for young fathers in custody which include their partners outside.

This DVD was filmed at HMP Ashwell and includes four young couples who have all completed a Relate course and includes interviews with couples on how they have managed to maintain relationships or develop solutions to enable the father to stay in contact with his children during his time in prison. It also looks at the impact of a father's imprisonment on his children.

What the Interviews cover:
Sticking together through a sentence
Effect on children
How to keep strong
Visits
Going Home
Sexual Relationships
Hopes and Dreams
Advice for others

HOW TO USE THE DVD:
The films are aimed at practitioners working with young parents in custody and in the community. The films are intended as a generic resource for all people working with young parents both in custody and in the community including: Yots, NOMS, prison officers, youth workers and services such as Sure Start, Connexions and Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinators.

How can they be used?
• Practitioners can use the DVDs as a resource to increase their knowledge of the issues young parents in the criminal justice system face and to develop ways of working with them as well as how to provide appropriate training.

The DVDs can also be used with young parents to:
• Provide young parents with the opportunity to hear from other young people in their situation and find out how they coped and got through it.
• To instigate and develop discussion with young parents (perhaps in conjunction with other family and parenting training) about how they feel or to identify support needs.
• As a preventative tool with young parents at risk of offending.
The films should also be relevant to sentencers, such as magistrates, as well as policy makers in both the field of criminal justice and family/welfare services. The films highlight service gaps for young parents in the CJS, their partners and families outside, and provide an opportunity to hear the views of young parents themselves on the support currently offered and their needs as they define them. The films can be used to:

- Raise awareness and understanding of young parents’ needs.
- Develop an appropriate service response for young parents and their children, before, during and after a sentence.
- Develop an effective Government strategy for young parents in the CJS.

PRT is grateful to all those who took part and kindly gave their permission for the films to be used for these purposes. Material from these films and the preparatory interviews with young people is also included in the text of this guide.

**HOW TO USE THE GUIDE:**

This guide has been prepared for people working with young parents and policy makers in the field to:

- Offer practitioners and managers the chance to hear the views of young people in custody and to understand the impact prison has had on them as parents, and how they feel about visits and the support they are offered.
- Present the views of staff working in custodial settings on the difficulties faced and highlight some of the tensions they experience in trying to balance security, staffing and resources whilst helping young parents maintain good links with their children.
- Profile good practice and innovative schemes which are helping to maintain and build family links as well as identifying barriers to progress and current gaps in services.
- Review current service provision for this group and identify gaps.
- Review current policy related to young parents.

The guide is designed to lead to the development of an effective, coherent Government strategy for young parents in the CJS.

**A note on child protection:**

Whilst the premise of the YPP project was that most children benefit from contact with their parents regardless of whether they are in or out of custody, inevitably there are cases and circumstances where contact between offender and child should not be encouraged or permitted and child protection procedures must be adhered to. Prison establishments will have all relevant information on whether parental contact with a child is permitted and strict policies on suitability for parenting training courses and special visits, which take into consideration factors such as nature of the offence. When considering the involvement of other agencies such as family services during the custodial period, careful consideration needs to be given to how this information is shared. PRT does not maintain that parental involvement is in the best interest of the child in all circumstances.
SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES – INTRODUCTION

- The numbers of parents in custody are not recorded but Home Office research indicates that 59 per cent of men in custody are fathers and 66 per cent of women prisoners are mothers (Hamlyn, B & Lews, D 2000). Routine recording of this information would enable individual establishments and the Prison Service to plan provision effectively.

- Good practice in family contact work exists but tends to be led by individuals or the voluntary sector and funding is usually short-term. There is a lack of focus on family contact work overall, with no coherent strategy or adequately designated responsibility.

- Mothers and fathers in prison face very different challenges mainly because mothers are more likely to be the primary carers and single parents prior to imprisonment, therefore having the worry of what is going to happen to their children.

- Prison overcrowding is at an all time high; prisoners are being placed further and further away from their homes, sometime moving from prison to prison (the ‘churn’). Pressures on prison staff are great. All of these factors combined mean that the maintenance of family contact and involvement of outside agencies is problematic.
Chapter One
The Policy Context

Since the start of the YPP project in 2001, there have been significant policy and service developments which will affect young parents both in the CJS and in the family and welfare services sector. These include the development of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) and the appointment of a Minister for Children, as well as significant changes within the DfES including its increased responsibility for family policy.

In 2001, young parents in custody, their families, partners and children, were largely excluded from the policy agenda and services for disadvantaged parents in the community were minimal. However, under this Government there has been a rapid expansion of general parenting initiatives and support for vulnerable families. In 2004, four policy documents covered imprisoned parents, in part, we believe, as a result of PRT’s and other campaigning groups’ work on putting them on the political agenda.

The remit of the YPP project was to address the needs of young parents, their partners, families and children, and to look at support services during custody and after release. Therefore, our interests cut across CJS and family policy. Historically, the two sectors have not worked together or provided a joined up or strategic approach to young parents in custody.

It is not within the scope of this project to consider the full content of the policy documents below. Rather, we have focused specifically on key points for imprisoned parents and analysed the potential impact for improved service provision.

THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

The Home Office:

The importance of maintaining family ties has been repeatedly asserted in policy documents, as has the role the family can play in aiding resettlement. Lord Woolf, in his report following the disturbances at Strangeways Prison, established the principle of locality stating that prisoners should generally be held as near to their family as possible: ‘where it is practical, prisons should be community prisons sited within reasonable proximity to, and having close connections with the community, with which the prisoners they hold have the closest links’ (Cited in Light, 1992). Martin Narey, Commissioner for Correctional Services has recognized that: ‘A stable, supportive family throughout the sentence is a key factor in preventing re-offending on release...I firmly believe that we should do as much as possible to sustain family relationships at what for many will be an especially traumatic time in their lives’ (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002). Prison Rule 31 states that – ‘special attention should be paid to the maintenance of such relations between a prisoner and his family as are desirable in the interests of both.’ The Home Office has also acknowledged that: ‘Research indicates that good family ties can reduce a prisoner’s risk of re-offending by six times’ (Home Office, 2002a).

However, these assertions need to be placed within the context of overcrowding, which makes implementation of family-friendly policies extremely difficult. Prison overcrowding is at an all time high. On 2nd July 2004, 91 of the 138 prisons in England and Wales were overcrowded (Prison Population & Accommodation Briefing for 2nd July 2004, HM Prison Service.) On that same date, the prison population in England and Wales stood at 74,700, the then highest ever recorded level (Prison Population and Accommodation Briefing for 2nd July 2004, HM Prison Service.) England and Wales has the second highest imprisonment rate in Western Europe at 141 per 100,000 of the population. It is
44 per cent higher than Germany and 52 per cent higher than France (Walmsley, 2004). At the end of May 2004 17,000 prisoners were sharing two to a cell (House of Commons Transcript of oral evidence to Home Affairs Select Committee on 25th May 2004). This overcrowding combined with the movement of prisoners from institution to institution (known as ‘the churn’), means that the struggle to maintain family ties and involve outside agencies becomes particularly difficult. Transfers between prisons due to overcrowding often disrupt drug treatment, education programmes, resettlement plans, service intervention and family ties. The National Audit Office highlighted the high number of movements of children between jails to make way for new arrivals, disrupting education and training courses and leading to inconsistent supervision. The NAO reports that there were 2,040 movements between April 2002 and January 2003 (Auditor General, 2003-2004, 21st January).

A study by PRT (PRT, 2002) and the National Advisory Council of Boards of Visitors (now Independent Monitoring Boards) examined the impact of overcrowding. Of the 103 Independent Monitoring Boards who responded, 77 expressed concern that overcrowding was threatening prison safety, leading to prisoners being held in inhumane, degrading and unsafe conditions and damaging attempts to maintain family support and reduce re-offending by prisoners. A follow-up report ‘A Lost Generation’ supports these findings and reveals the impoverished state of regimes for 18-20 year olds (PRT, 2004).

‘Very many prisoners are held at some distance from their families. At the end of September 2003, 26,134 prisoners were held over 50 miles from their committal court town and 10,800 were held over 100 miles away, (Letter from Paul Goggins, Minister for Prisons and Probation to Annette Brooke MP, 18th December 2003). The Prison Service has also been increasingly restrictive in its use of temporary leave for prisoners. One Home Office study found that only half the women who had lived with their children or been in contact before prison had received a visit since being in prison (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002). The number of prison visits has fallen by a third in the past five years, despite a more than 20 per cent rise in the prison population.

The number of young people in custody has risen dramatically over the last decade. On 2nd July 2004, there were 10,821 under 21-year olds in prisons in England and Wales. Of these 2,586 were under 18 (Prison Population and Accommodation Briefing for 2nd July 2004.) The vast majority, over 8000, were aged 18-20. Young adult offenders make up 42 per cent of first time offenders (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002). Many young offenders receive short sentences (less than 12 months). In 2002, short-term prisoners made up a quarter of the young adult population (Home Office, 2003). The average time spent in custody for all short-term prisoners is eight weeks and one day (Home Office, 2003).

Many young adult prisoners have a background of severe social exclusion: 75 per cent have been excluded from school at some stage, and 63 per cent were unemployed at time of arrest. Most young people in custody have grown up in communities with high levels of deprivation, crime, violence and drug use (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002). Reconviction rates are particularly high for young people, 71 per cent of young adult men aged 18-20 released from prison in 1998 were reconvicted within two years (Home Office, 2003). The Chief Inspector of Prisons has expressed concern about the lack of a coherent strategy, agreed standards, or funding for 18-21 year olds despite a commitment in the 2001 Labour Party manifesto to improve provision for this group (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2004 Annual Report).

On 2nd July 2004, there were 2,586 under 18-year-olds in prisons in England and Wales (Prison Population & Accommodation Briefing for 2nd July 2004). Most children in prison also have a background of severe social exclusion: over a quarter have literacy and numeracy levels of seven year-olds (Youth Justice Board Information, 2003). Over half have been in care at some stage in their lives, or experienced social services involvement, 45 per cent have been permanently excluded from school (Youth Justice Board Information, 2003). Reconviction rates for this group can exceed 80 per cent (Youth Justice Board Information, 2003).
The number of ethnic minority prisoners is particularly high. Black prisoners alone account for 15 per cent of the total prison population (Hollis et al, 2003). Staff from ethnic minority backgrounds are under-represented at a senior level. This over-representation of people from some black and minority ethnic backgrounds in the adult prison population is also seen in the juvenile estate. The Commission for Racial Equality now estimates that there are more young black men entering prison than going to university (HM Prison Service and Commission for Racial Equality, 2003).

Finally, the number of women held in custody has also increased rapidly. On 2nd July 2004 there were 4,475 women in prison - an increase of almost 200 per cent in the last ten years. Women are also likely to have come from socially excluded backgrounds and the majority are convicted for non-violent offences (Home Office (2003), Prison Statistics England and Wales, 2002). All these groups are likely to have mental health problems.

The Home Office has acknowledged the importance of family ties in reducing re-offending by supporting in some measure a number of parenting and family support initiatives, such as the Eastern Region Partnership, PACT Visitors’ Centres, Action for Prisoners’ Families, Support a Family Day in October 2004 and the ‘Family Man’ course delivered by Safe Ground. However, this support is ad hoc and not part of an overall strategy to prioritise the needs of young parents and their families. The lack of commitment cannot wholly be explained by current population pressures on the prison system.

As part of the YPP campaigning work a series of Parliamentary Questions on key issues for young parents were placed.

We were particularly concerned that data on the numbers of young parents in custody was not routinely collected, which made service provision difficult. The responses show that the only available data is either very out of date or relies on small unrepresentative samples. However, since placing these Parliamentary Questions plans have been outlined in the Child Poverty Review (HM Treasury, 2004) to collect data on all imprisoned parents under the new NOMS structure. We are delighted that a commitment to collect this data has finally been made. However, it is not clear at this stage how and when this will take place.

**Families at risk – 5.160 – CHILD POVERTY REVIEW (HM Treasury, 2004)**

‘NOMS will deliver a case management approach to offenders, with prisoners who are parents identified before arrival at prison, and consistently throughout the prison estate. This will be achieved through a requirement on offender managers to ask offenders for the information and to include it in their report before a sentence is passed. NOMS will also identify where improvements need to be made in information exchange and develop and implement solutions.’

**Parliamentary Questions placed on data collection prior to the Child Poverty Review.**

**Hansard written answer: 10th February 2003 - Mr Paul Stinchcombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) fathers and (b) mothers are in prison, who are aged (i) under 18, (ii) 18-21 (iii) 21-31 and (iv) 31-41 years.

**Mr Hilary Benn:** There is no routinely collected data on the number and age of fathers and mothers in prison. However, a Home Office study of a large sample of imprisoned women and mothers, published in 1997, found that 60% of female prisoners, sentenced and unsentenced, had dependent children under the age of 18. Another smaller but more recent study of women prisoners and their work in custody, published in 2000, found that broadly similar results (out of a sample of 567 sentenced women, 66% had dependent children under the age of 18). Directly equivalent information for male prisoners is not available. However, the 1991 England and Wales Prison Survey showed that 32% of male prisoners had dependent children, who had been living with them just before they were imprisoned; the corresponding figure for female prisoners is 47%.
Hansard written answer: 28th April 2003 - Mr Huw Edwards: What proportion of a) male and b) female inmates have dependent children?

Mr Hilary Benn: Information on the number of prisoners with dependent children is not routinely collected. However, surveys conducted between 1994 and 2000 indicated that 59% of men and 66% of women had dependent children.

Mr Edwards: May I suggest to my hon. Friend that such information should be routinely collected and published?

Hilary Benn: I agree there needs to be greater consistency. On the collection of information, part of the difficulty is that 200,000 or so people pass through the prison system every year and prisoners may not always choose to give correct information about their family circumstances when questioned. However, we have just completed a resettlement survey of 2000 prisoners who are about to leave prison and who may be more inclined to give accurate information about their family circumstances and those relating to children.

Hansard written answer: 5th January 2004 - Vera Baird: What estimate has he made on the number of children under 18 years of age whose mothers are in prison, where the mother is the child’s primary carer?

Paul Goggins: The most recently derived information on this subject is derived from a survey of 301 white and Afro-Caribbean (or mixed race) female prisoners who were drug users. This survey was carried out in 2001 and published in 2003. It showed that 70% (211) had children under the age of 18. Between them the 211 mothers had 473 children. This suggests that for every female prisoner, there are roughly 1.5 children in the community. Ofsted reports do include a question on whether they have any children. At least information is available in inspected juvenile establishments. These reports are available on the HMCIP website as reports of Education and Training Inspection.

Pregnant women in custody

Our research with young mothers in custody revealed that conditions for pregnant women were particularly poor and that their healthcare needs were not being met appropriately in custody. We placed the following question to find out the obligations of the Prison Service to pregnant women in custody.

Hansard written answer: 16th February 2004 - Mrs Brooke: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many pregnant women there are in prison; how many there were in each of the last five years; what policies the Prison Service has in place for the care and treatment of pregnant women; and whether these policies cover (a) dietary requirements, (b) access to showers and (c) requirements for the safe and respectful transfer of pregnant prisoners.

Paul Goggins: Precise information on the number of pregnant women in prison is not available, but recent estimates based on a survey suggest that at any one time about 120 women prisoners are pregnant. Prison Service healthcare departments liaise with local NHS midwifery services and antenatal care is normally provided by midwives from the local NHS Trusts. The objective remains that these women have the same access to these services as the local population. The care plan for them will include diet and hygiene provision in line with the NHS policy. The escorting procedures for pregnant women is covered by the Prison Service Security Manual and, where a woman’s pregnancy is known to a prison, the prison is expected to assess the appropriate means of transport for her. This can involve the use of a private vehicle.

Hansard written answer: 28th April 2003 - Dr Vis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether juvenile girls in prisons who are pregnant are given additional food. Hilary Benn: The health care provision for pregnant women in prison reflects that available in the community and dietary and medical supplements are made available and prescribed as necessary. Dr Vis: to ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what punishments juvenile girls in prisons who are pregnant may be subjected to. Hilary Benn: Punishments are applied with proper regard to the individual circumstances of the prisoner, including their medical condition. Pregnancy is one of the factors taken into account when determining the appropriate punishment in an individual case.
Our research and other available evidence shows that in practice pregnant women are not receiving the same medical care as women in the community. The fact that data is not collected on the number of pregnant women in custody would suggest that appropriate service provision for this group must be difficult to guage.

Our research also showed that the fact that a woman had dependent children was rarely taken into consideration by sentencers, despite the Halliday recommendation in 'Making Punishments Work,' that dependent children should be taken into consideration in sentencing decisions involving people with primary care responsibilities.

Hansard written answer: 8th July 2003 - Mr Stinchcombe: to ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action has been taken to implement the recommendation in the Halliday report 'Making Punishments work' which states that dependent children should be taken into consideration when sentencing mothers. Mr. Goggins: The Halliday report 'Making Punishments Work' advocated maintaining the principle of equal treatment and there should be no preferential treatment between men and women offenders in sentencing. However, this does not mean that sentences are necessarily right for different groups who may be differently affected. It is legitimate for a court to take account of the impact of a sentence on other people – including dependent children - as one part of the overall picture. The report recommended the establishment of a body with the power to issue guidelines on sentencing issues. The Government accepted this recommendation by proposing the setting up of the Sentencing Guidelines Council. The sentencing of mothers with dependent children is likely to be an issue which the Council will consider as part of its overall work.’

We hope that the Sentencing Guidelines Council will now consider the sentencing of primary carers within its remit.

Placing prisoners close to home seems to be a losing battle for the Prison Service. Our research demonstrates this is particularly the case for young men.

Hansard written answer: 13th November 2003 - Lord Hylton:What weight is given to maintaining family links, especially those between parents and children, where prisoners are allocated to prisons? Baroness Scotland of Asthal: The Prison Service of England and Wales places great importance on prisoners maintaining close ties with family and friends and does everything reasonably possible, within the current population pressures, to ensure that prisoners are allocated to a prison near to their homes. However, high population levels throughout the Prison Service estate can lead to prisoners being transferred from their home area to establishments with a greater number of vacancies. Otherwise, local prisons and remand centres would be able to provide accommodation to meet the needs of courts.

Another issue for prisoners and their families was provision for children at visits and beforehand. The use of visitors’ centres was often negligible and many sites did not have them. We asked a Parliamentary Question about plans to expand the number and develop them.

Hansard written answer: 28th April 2003 - Mrs Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the prisons that have prison visiting facilities which are (a) permanent (b) temporary(2) which of the prisons that have prison visiting facilities include facilities which cater for (a) people with disabilities (b) children? Paul Goggins: …Over 90 prisons provide additional facilities such as visitors’ centres. Prison Governors are required to comply with the duty under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 to provide adequate facilities for peoples’ disabilities and to make ‘reasonable adjustments’ to existing facilities. … Over 80 prisons provide play areas for children and an increasing number offer extended day visits.

The answer does not indicate any plans by the Prison Service to invest in the expansion of visitors’ centres. This is despite the importance ascribed to them in the Reducing Re-offending National Action
Plan (Home Office, 2004b): ‘Visitors’ centres have an important role to play in helping to keep families together and enabling them to contribute to rehabilitation in a meaningful way.’

As the link between family contact and reducing re-offending is well documented, we felt that family contact work should be placed on the resettlement agenda and asked to what extent families were involved in this area:

**Hansard written answer: 28th April 2003 - Families and resettlement: Mr Oaten: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to reduce re-offending by (a) involving families in resettlement work throughout the prison sentence and (b) maintaining prisoners’ family ties.**

**Paul Goggins:** The Prison Service acknowledges that family and other community links are vital to effective resettlement of prisoners, and that families have a valuable role to play in helping to reduce re-offending and protect the public. With regard to offenders under the age of 18, and all those sentenced to the Detention and Training Order, there is a mandatory requirement on governors to ensure that, where appropriate, families are given the opportunity to contribute to the sentence planning process throughout the custodial part of the sentence. For adult prisoners the extent of involvement is left to the discretion of individual establishments. The Prison Service has been working, together with other agencies, to develop an integrated approach to supporting prisoners and their families in sustaining their relationships. Examples of such work include:

- Participation in the Inter-Ministerial Group response to the Social Exclusion Unit report ‘Reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners’, in particular how best to take forward the proposal for a National Rehabilitation Strategy. Establishment of a seven-year partnership with voluntary and statutory agencies in the Eastern Area offering a comprehensive package of services and support to the families of prisoners within prisons and in the wider community. Providing information to prisoners to enable them to maintain family links and giving advice to families about prisons and the opportunities for keeping in touch. Enabling prisoners’ families to maintain ties through improved visiting conditions, such as extended family visits; play areas and story tapes for children recorded by the imprisoned parent; and increasing the number of visitors’ centres which offer additional support. Development of family learning programmes, some of which include attendance by partners and children. Refocusing of the multi-agency Family Ties Consultative Group to enhance policy development in this area.

The answer demonstrates that there is no clear commitment as yet to involving families directly in sentence management and resettlement plans for the adult population.

**NOMS and the Reducing Re-offending National Action Plan:**

In response to a review of Correctional Services ‘Managing Offenders, Reducing Crime’ in December 2003, the Home Secretary announced the setting up of a new National Offender Management Service (NOMS): ‘Noms should ensure the end-to-end management of the offenders both in the community and in custody and combine the National Probation Service and Prison Service.’ Children and families are included as Pathway 6 and are firmly on the agenda. The plan acknowledges the need to develop support for children and families and refers to proposals made in the Green Paper ‘Every Child Matters’ (DFES, 2003) and highlights the services and resources developed for families at risk that are appropriate for children and families of offenders such as Sure Start, the Children’s Fund and Connexions.

We welcome the recognition of the needs of offenders’ families and children and the implementation of plans to support them. However, we would like to see evidence that the following issues have been given consideration:

- **How will NOMS support young parents?**
- **Are offenders’ families likely to be included in resettlement plans?**

‘Youth Justice – The Next Steps, was produced by the Home Office as a companion document to the original children’s Green Paper ‘Every Child Matters’ in September 2003. It set out how family/welfare services and the CJS would remain distinct systems but would provide an increased multi-agency response. However, despite this, it appears that there was little consultation between the Home Office and DfES in the production of this document. However, in‘Every Child Matters – the next steps, (DfES, 2004) it does state that DfES plans will compliment those outlined in ‘Youth Justice – The Next Steps’ (Home Office, 2003). It did not mention or include support for young offender parents and only included details of introducing parenting contracts and strengthening Parenting Orders for parents of offenders.

The reorganisation of the female estate

In 1999 the Prison Service recognised the need to focus on the particular needs of women prisoners and created a separate unit at Prison Service HQ to manage the female estate. On 1st April 2004 centralised management was dismantled and replaced with regional control. It is believed that the move will better enable female prisoners to access local services. There is now a Women’s Team based at Prison Service Headquarters, which continues to develop operational policy to meet the needs of women in custody.

The implications of this change cannot yet be adequately assessed. However, the change did raise concerns from voluntary and charity organisations that the needs of women in the CJS would be given lower priority if they did not have a separate managing body. The independent inquiry into women’s imprisonment, chaired by Professor Dorothy Wedderburn and commissioned by PRT, recommended the establishment of a Women’s Justice Board to oversee all work with women offenders.

FAMILY AND WELFARE SERVICES

DfES:

Under the current Government service development to support disadvantaged parents has been rapid:

‘It is undoubtedly the case since New Labour took office that there has been a rapid expansion in the range and scale of parenting interventions that is distinctive. This Government has given a high priority to parenting in its social exclusion and criminal justice agenda, and clearly sees the promotion of good parenting as a significant tool in fostering social cohesion.’ (Cited in Henricson, 2003b.)

Demonstrations of the commitment to parenting support have included: the establishment of a task force and then a Ministerial Group on the Family, The Family Policy Unit at the Home Office, National Family and Parenting Institute and the development of Sure Start and Connexions. In 2003, the Government formed the Children, Young People and Families Directorate and the Rt Hon. Margaret Hodge MP was appointed as the first Minister of State for Children in the Department for Education and Skills. Subsequently, the Teenage Pregnancy Unit has moved from the Department of Health into DfES joining Sure Start and Connexions all under the one Directorate. In March 2004 the Government introduced into Parliament The Children Bill, which included the creation of a £25m million Parenting Fund to support a wide range of voluntary and community services providing parenting support.
The Green Paper, Every Child Matters, welcomed by the Prime Minister in September 2003 highlights the negative impact of parental imprisonment on children and the increased pressures it creates for prisoners’ families. It acknowledges service provision in this area has been inadequate and patchy, and reliant upon individual and non-statutory sector initiative.

‘There is nobody currently within prisons or among community services with responsibility for supporting families in maintaining links and overcoming their problems. A number of schemes mainly led by the voluntary sector have emerged. However, support for the children and families of offenders still depends largely on local initiative and will.’ Every Child Matters – (DfES, 2003) – Green Paper

This Green Paper led to the publication of ‘Every Child Matters: The Next Steps’ (DfES, 2004) which outlined future plans and included consideration of comments from consultation, at the same time, the Government introduced into Parliament The Children Bill. The Children Bill included the announcement of the creation of a ‘Children’s Commissioner for England’ who will report annually to Parliament through the Secretary of State. It sets out how national policies should work together to create broad support for children. Supporting parents and carers is one of the key areas identified.

Children’s Trusts will be created in every local authority under legislation in The Children Bill, bringing together all key children’s services (cited in DfES, 2004). (The Bill does not create these Trusts as statutory organizations but encourages and facilitates their development). The Bill also includes legislation to create a Director of Children’s Services within each local authority. Yots will be located within these Trusts which should lead to greater information sharing between CJS and family and welfare services for young people and therefore potentially a more integrated structure to build support for young offender parents and their children. Social Services staff will be located within these Children’s Trusts which now have a statutory duty to safeguard the welfare of children in prison.

On 12 November 2003, the Howard League for Penal Reform won a Judicial Review against the Home Secretary arguing that the Children Act 1989 applied to children in prison. So far local authorities have not developed implementation plans for putting this ruling into practice and ‘Every Child Matters: the next steps’ (DfES, 2004) does not address this issue.

The new structures for children’s services are intended to enable multi-agency working to be more effective and for information sharing between agencies to improve. The Children Bill included a framework for information sharing systems and the establishment of databases containing basic information about all children.

One of the key difficulties for young people in custody is that they move from institution to institution frequently. These factors have made service intervention and the sharing of information between services in different localities very difficult. Similarly, prisoners’ children often move frequently during their parent’s sentence. There are no clear systems outlined for sharing information across local authorities. What is more, this paper does not consider how services can access or engage with hard to reach groups such as young parents and their children involved in the CJS. Evidence to date has demonstrated that services have struggled to reach these groups.

However, in ‘Every Child Matters: Next Steps’ (DfES, 2004) it does state that the DfES intends to make use of parenting programmes for young offender parents. The fact that young offenders as parents are being included is a positive step.
Every Child Matters: next steps – (DfES, 2004)

4.21 ‘We shall make fuller use of parenting programmes, both with young offenders’ families and with young offenders who are themselves parents.’

It is unclear how this will work in practice. The Minister of State for Children does not currently have a remit for children in the juvenile system, who remain within the remit of the Home Office. The Minister’s remit does, however, cover children of offenders. We think that ways need to be found of addressing the needs of both together. Further consultation between the Home Office and DfES would ensure an integrated response to the needs of imprisoned parents and their children. Margaret Hodge MP, Minister of State for Children, Young People and Families was invited to comment on provision for young parents and replied:

‘Providing support to young parents in the criminal justice system is a matter of concern to various parts of the Government, including the Home Office, Youth Justice Board and of course DfES.’

HM Treasury: Child Poverty Review 2004

The Spending Review builds on existing support and outlines plans to invest extra resources in Early Years services such as Sure Start which has had its budget increased considerably. The document outlines plans to expand parenting support and provides further information on the development of children’s centres which it states it:

‘Will bring together in one location a variety of public and other services currently offered to young children, parents and carers to include; ante natal, post natal care, children’s health services, parenting support, advice on financial support, support parents with work, education and training opportunities and services to reach out to disadvantaged groups.’

The Review also mentions preventing the risks of inter-generational offending, and highlights the detrimental effects of having a parent in prison: ‘It proposes to tackle the reduction of this through: identification of prisoners who are parents delivered by NOMS and recording of this data, radical new approaches to integrate women offenders into mainstream support services following release in order to reduce the risks of re-offending and poverty on their children and most significantly through the promotion of community penalties through NOMS to reduce the numbers of imprisoned parents.’

‘Having a parent in prison can have a particularly detrimental impact on children. Each year approximately 150,000 children have a parent who enters prison. Sources of income and benefit can be lost exposing the family to poverty. Prison sentences can also break up family relationships. Forty-five per cent of offenders lose contact with their families while serving a sentence. As a result, their children are more likely to suffer from stigmatisation, disturbed sleep and mental and physical ill health.’ Families at risk, child crime and anti-social behaviour (HM Treasury, Child Poverty review 2004).

We welcome these plans; ensuring data was collected on imprisoned parents and the promotion of community alternatives for parents were two key objectives of the YPP project. These proposals should bring significant improvement for both offenders and their children. Following this Review Hazel Blears Minister of State at the Home Office with responsibility for crime reduction, policing and community safety has outlined plans in the press to track offenders’ children (The World Today, 2004). There are fears that such a proposal would violate children’s rights raise welfare concerns and see them further stigmatised. Lucy Gampell, Director for Action for Prisoners’ Families commented that plans to track offender children in this way is inappropriate as they are already stigmatised, vulnerable and have not committed a crime. PRT does not support the tracking of offender’s children in this way; the focus
needs to be on increased use of community penalties for parents, keeping prisoners closer to home maintaining family ties and providing families with non-judgemental and accessible services rather than the implementation of plans which will inevitably further alienate this group.

CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY – THE POLICY CONTEXT

Home Office:

- The Home Office has supported a range of parenting initiatives or schemes to increase family contact but there is no overall strategy for families or central funding. Data on imprisoned parents has not been collected to date but the ‘Child Poverty Review’ (HM: Treasury, 2004) does outline plans to commence this data collection. The prison system is under pressure due to overcrowding but particular concerns raised as part of this project include; the healthcare of pregnant women in custody, sentencing decisions for primary carers, prisoners’ distance from home, funding and development of visitors’ centres and including families in the resettlement agenda.

- The Reducing Re-offending National Action Plan (Home Office, 2004f) does include children and families of offenders but does not include families in the resettlement planning process. The Home Office paper ‘Youth Justice – the next steps’ (Home Office, 2003d) does not make any reference to juveniles as parents.

DFES:

- The Government commitment to supporting disadvantaged parents and children and setting up services to meet this need has been strong. Children of imprisoned parents and their children have only recently reached the policy agenda – ‘Every Child Matters, Green Paper (DFES, 2003) included children of imprisoned parents, the ‘Child Poverty Review’ (HM: Treasury, 2004) also recognises their needs and the inter-generational effects of parental imprisonment and ‘Every Child Matters: the next steps’ (DFES, 2004) specifically says it will provide support to young offenders who are parents. However, it is unclear how this support will be provided in practice and whether the very specific needs of this group have been fully considered. Further consultation between the Home Office and DFES would ensure an integrated response to the needs of imprisoned parents and their children.
Chapter Two
Service Provision for Young Parents

Most young parents in custody will have had minimal involvement with health and family services prior to custody. A key objective of our project was to work with national organisations which provide support to disadvantaged parents in the community to encourage them to engage with young offender parents and their families prior to release. It was hoped that all partnerships may then be established on the seven research sites depending on the type of support required; for example Sure Start Services, Connexions, Yots and Probation Services. Senior officials in these organisations expressed a keen interest in improving provision for young offender parents. As part of our preparation for this report we invited the Chief Executives of each of the organisations mentioned to comment on their provision for young parents who offend and inform us of any future planned work. In this chapter we consider how far services in both the criminal justice sector and family/welfare services are meeting young parents’ needs. The voluntary sector, whether large organisations or small local initiatives, has an invaluable contribution to make in this area.

THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

The National Probation Service

The emphasis in probation work has shifted significantly and whilst there used to be a strong focus on welfare it now has an emphasis on risk assessment and management. This has led to there being less emphasis on work with families. Work with the families of offenders also used to form part of its family court work. There is now a strong case for family work to be incorporated in the resettlement agenda.

Prior to the development of NOMS we conducted a survey of National Probation Services. The survey went to all Probation areas to document if and how they work with young parents and we completed follow up panel interviews. The aims were to reveal underlying challenges and opportunities, to discuss current issues in practice and to help generate ideas about how to strengthen probation work with young parents. The method took the form of a questionnaire survey. The target sample was 42 local probation areas. The total number of respondents was 13 giving an overall response rate of 31%. The survey aims where:

• To explore how probation services are recording information about young parents under 25, who are offenders
• To find out the number of young parent offenders among the offenders who the probation service is working with
• To identify support for parents available through the probation service
• To identify useful resources and particular information needs.

The results demonstrate that probation staff do not routinely collect data on parental status of those that they work with and that they do not specifically work with parents. They would only do this if it was made a significant part of the resettlement agenda. (See Appendix 3 for the full survey results.)

Steve Murphy, Director General Probation Service was invited to comment on the report and replied:

"NPS is acutely aware of the wider societal consequences of agencies, failings in terms of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, and developing the abilities to protect and nurture.

The NPS contribution to safeguarding has been in working together with other agencies through local child protection arrangements. Part of our core public protection function is to
minimise the risk of violence and exploitation to specific children, and to safeguard children and young people by working with those offenders who are assessed as posing a risk of harm to them.

Currently, the National Probation Directorate is taking part in the development of guidance for the implementation of the future Children Act. The Act will place a duty on Probation Areas to cooperate in local arrangements to improve the well-being of the children in their local authorities’ areas. The Probation Service locally will take part in setting strategies to promote better outcomes for children and young people, and the way we exercise this strategic partnership approach may begin to address some of the issues raised in this Report. Our core public protection function means that we must assess the risks posed by offenders who have a parental responsibility, and work with them in order to protect children’s services and those in the voluntary and public sector on a local basis, so probation staff can address the needs of offenders who are parents. Thus they may carry out their safeguarding children function through helping to enhance their parenting skills in partnership with other agencies who are able to do this.’

Youth Justice Board

The YJB has overall responsibility for Yots based in each local authority in England and Wales. As part of the YJB agenda to reduce the risk for young people identified at risk of offending they have placed a strong emphasis on parenting programmes for parents with children who offend and there are plans to increase these initiatives. Programmes for parents with children who offend currently reach 5,500 parents per annum (YJB, 2004b). However, the YJB does not appear to have given any significant consideration to the needs of offenders who are themselves parents and their children. In order to gain further clarification in this area, the Prison Reform Trust carried out a survey with all Yots to establish how they respond and work with young parents. The survey reveals that there is no routine collection of data on offender parents although most Yot workers would ask for this information in some form. None of the Yots had specific interventions designed for young parents but most of them try to refer young parents to a range of appropriate support agencies. (See Appendix 4 for full Yots survey.)

Ellie Roy, Chief Executive YJB was invited to comment on the report and replied:

‘The Youth Justice Board attaches great priority to the development of parenting interventions, which will support and assist parents of young offenders in increasing their ability to parent children. We know that the development of more effective parenting increases their ability to parent children. Through the publication of the ‘Key Elements of Effective Practice’ the Board disseminates knowledge about effective practice in working with parents. This is linked with the Board’s workforce training strategy and training and qualification framework including the Parenting INSET training pack, which expands and develops information on effective practice in parenting work. Following a quality assessment of youth offending teams’ parenting work, the Trust for the Study of Adolescence, working as Development Support Parenting, is currently working for the Board to assist Yots in improving their performance within a national improvement strategy.

In connection with support for young offenders who are parents, a report was recently commissioned by YJB from TSA. This report and other information was summarised and the report recommended a joint planning session involving TSA, PRT and key stakeholders to review the current knowledge base and develop an action plan.

The YJB supports the development of specific work to assist young offenders who are parents, mindful of the strong case that for these young people improving parenting knowledge and skill can be an important way to strengthen community ties and assist effective rehabilitation. The current position is that within the constraints of existing resources, the focus of YJB work has been to support Yots in building a basic range of effective parenting interventions. Bids for
additional Government money to take forward specific parenting work with targeted groups including young offender parents, fathers and BME parents have not been successful to date. We are particularly aware that at local level, many Yots are experiencing great difficulty meeting existing priorities and the increasing demand arising from new legislation introduced to counter anti-social behaviour. Concerning your specific suggestion to collect data on the numbers of young offenders who are parents, changes to ASSET, the core assessment tool, have considerable cost and operational implications and are probably not feasible in the short-term given the lack of additional resources to meet any unmet need in this area, as part of the current review of YJB Counting Rules.

While the YJB would in general very much welcome the opportunity to take forward work to support and assist young offender parents and to develop a considered strategy with this aim in mind, unfortunately, there is not the capacity within present resources to initiate a new broad programme of work. Inevitably any progress in the future will depend on identifying the requisite resources.

**The Prison Service**

According to the Prison Service’s mission statement, it ‘has a duty to keep in custody those committed by the courts and to look after them with humanity and respect and to help them to lead law-abiding lives in custody and after release’. The Service also requires its staff to manage visits and contact with prisoners’ families and friends with humanity and respect. Lord Woolf in his inquiry into the disturbances at Strangeways prison noted that ‘Inmates generally prize visits above all other privileges.’ There are clear rules in respect of prison visits and more recently introduced child protection procedures. In addition the Chief Inspector of Prisons produced a detailed set of expectations regarding family contact in 2004.

While Home Office research shows that maintaining good family contact will reduce re-offending by six times, visits to prison have dropped in line with the steep rise in prison numbers and the movement of prisoners from one jail to another. Prisoners, including young parents, are often held far from home and far from the support they will need on release. Young fathers and mothers in the research expressed concern about the difficulties of families traveling to see them with small children. The YPP project found pockets of good practice where special family visits were organized. In a few prisons family co-ordinator posts had been established. This model for supporting positive contact between prisoners and their families was initially developed in the Scottish Prison Service where a greater commitment is given to this activity, and more recognition is made of the importance of its place in the resettlement agenda.

Phil Wheatley, Director General of HM Prison Service was invited to comment on the report and replied:

‘Visiting a family member or a friend in prison can be a difficult experience. However we consider this of vital importance and in our power to make it as easy and comfortable as possible. I am pleased that our work with the OLSU through DfES has enabled the Service to offer more support to parents in custody particularly through parenting education programmes. The Prison Service also has a well established Family Ties Group which includes representation from voluntary organisations. It is challenging and sometimes stressful for staff when they are trying to support young parents often held at a great distance from their homes. Budgetary constraints on the Service place Governors in a situation where they have to balance competing priorities.

It’s important we don’t overuse prison. It’s expensive, it is disruptive to the loved ones of those who come inside, often entirely innocent families and children whose whole life has to change as a result, it’s a difficult experience to get through. Prison should only be used where the seriousness of the offence or the need to protect the public fully justifies custody.’
Offenders Learning and Skills Unit

The Offenders Learning and Skills Unit (OLSU) supports a strategic partnership between the Department for Education and Skills and the Prison Service and has been operational since 2001. OLSU is responsible for taking forward the Government’s manifesto to improve the quality and quantity of learning and skills in prison. From April 2004 it also had responsibility for policy and funding of learning and skills for offenders under supervision in the community.

OLSU was invited to comment on the report and replied:

‘OLSU welcomes this report from the Prison Reform Trust on parenting issues. Addressing this area is central to the Government’s drive to reduce re-offending as set out in the Reducing Re-offending National Action Plan.’

During the early stages of our research we observed that OLSU’s focus was not primarily on the needs of young offender parents in prison. However, more recently OLSU has demonstrated a firm interest in parenting and family learning; in 2003 each prison area was invited to bid for funds from the unit to develop peer partnership schemes and family learning projects. It is working with partners across government and in the voluntary sector including Fathers Direct, the Parenting Education and Support Forum and Safe Ground to develop parenting and family learning in prisons and has provided funding for these initiatives. OLSU held a national conference in Wakefield on 18th November 2003, to help establishments share good practice and learn about new initiatives. At this event practitioners identified difficulties in sharing information about good practice and expressed a clear need for a national database on parenting and family learning initiatives to be developed in order to share good practice. In response to this OLSU have said it is:

a) Commissioning the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) to set up a ‘Promising Practice’ database which will allow practitioners to share examples of effective practice in the full range of offender learning and skills, including parenting and family learning in both prison and probation settings.

b) Working with the Learning and Skills Council to pilot regional family learning models covering prison and probation.

‘The Secretary of State has announced that a new post-16 quality improvement body will be set up in the near future, so good practice databases of this kind are likely to be maintained by that agency. Such an agency would be able to cross-fertilize good practice in parenting/family learning settings. The LSC will also take a keen interest in the content of such good practice databases in order to inform decision about the planning and funding of offender learning and skills.’ (OLSU, November 2004).

We also found that OLSU did not hold a list of all the parenting courses currently running in custodial institutions which is essential to keep track of progress in this area. OLSU stated that:

‘This kind of database is different and should be held by Learning and Skills Councils; in future, LSCs will plan and fund all offender learning alongside mainstream post-16 responsibilities, in partnership with Prison Service, Probation Service, YJB, Jobcentre Plus, Connexions Service, Youth Offender Teams etc. Three Development regions (North West, South West, North East) are prototyping the new approach and will go live with the full service in August 2005. OLSU will retain a policy role in relation to offender learning.’ (OLSU, November 2004).

OLSU did conduct a survey of family learning in summer 2004 which was sent to all prison establishments, sixty prisons responded.
Our research also identified the urgent need for diversity issues to be addressed within the parenting agenda. OLSU commented we strongly agree that diversity issues should be addressed in all aspects of an establishment’s learning and skills provision and have supported two national ‘Responding to Diversity’ conferences for education contractors and teachers. In conjunction with National Open College Network, OLSU has also developed Diversity and Equality modules on: the historical aspects of diversity and equality, cultural beliefs, values and prejudice, challenging prejudice and discrimination and responding to diversity.’ (OLSU November 2004).

‘Heads of Learning and Skills in prisons are responsible for ensuring that all learning and skills provision takes account of equality and diversity issues. Heads of Learning and Skills also lead their establishments in compiling an annual self assessment report which evaluates how well equal opportunity issues are tackled within learning and skills provision. HMPS is introducing a Diversity Key Performance Target (KPT) from April ’05. A recording mechanism, being piloted now, will include an activity area that will enable analysis by race.’ (OLSU, November 2004).

FAMILY AND WELFARE SERVICES

Teenage Pregnancy Unit: DfES

The Teenage Pregnancy Unit is a cross-Government Unit located within the Department of Education and Skills to implement the action points of the Social Exclusion Unit’s report. The overall responsibility for the strategy is held by the Minister of State for Children, Margaret Hodge. The Unit moved from the Department of Health to the Department for Education and Skills in June 2003. It was set up to implement the delivery of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy nationally and at local authority level with the appointment of Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinators in each top-tier local authority. There are four key strands to the strategy: joined-up action at local level, a national campaign, prevention and support for teenage parents. The plan addressed needs to reach specific groups including young fathers, minority ethnic groups and young offenders.

Teenage Pregnancy Strategy (Social Exclusion Unit, 1999).
Action pt 20 –
Young Offenders – Every young offender institution will offer sexual health education and parenting classes. Prison Service to ensure by 2001 that SRE and parenting education are offered in all YOIs.

The TPU has established an excellent database of innovative practice projects, specifically for young parents, many of which we have drawn upon. However, despite examples of good practice, it is generally perceived that the TPU has so far not reached young offender parents in a significant way. An Independent Advisory Group on Teenage Pregnancy advises Ministers on the Strategy and in its second Annual Report (2003) the Advisory Group acknowledged significant progress in some areas but included a call for information campaigns to be intensified to target specific groups who are disadvantaged and difficult to reach, including those in the youth justice system.

‘The Independent Advisory Group recommends that the national campaign targets those who are disadvantaged or hard to reach. Special efforts must be made to reach people from ethnic minorities, boys and young men, young people with learning difficulties, looked after young people, young parents, care leavers and those within the juvenile system.’

The Independent Advisory Committee on Teenage Pregnancy and its chair Lady Winifred Tumim, have recently taken a close interest in teenage parents in custody. We hope they will make them a higher priority in the 3rd Annual report due in December 2004.
The Teenage Pregnancy Unit was invited to comment on this report and replied:

‘The Teenage Pregnancy Unit is working closely with the Youth Justice Board and with colleagues in the Children, Young People and Families Directorate, who lead on youth justice issues in DfES, to ensure that there is appropriate provision for teenage female offenders who are pregnant, who give birth in custody or are teenage mothers, and that arrangements on release provide them with support for their education, health, for their parenting role, their housing needs including for supported housing. We will be drawing on research already done for the Prison Service by Juliet Lyon and Catherine Dennison, Trust for the Study of Adolescence, on young parent offenders and on this important research report from the Prison Reform Trust.’

Sure Start

Sure Start’s overall aim is to help provide the best possible start in life for all children. It plays a part in the Government’s ambition to halve child poverty by 2010. It is also a significant contributor to the Government’s aim of delivering opportunity and security for all. Sure Start supports families from pregnancy right through until a child is 14, and is particularly targeted at disadvantaged families and as such should be an ideal service for prisoners’ families and offender parents following release. The Sure Start Unit is an integral part of the Government’s newly formed Children, Young People and Families Directorate. Whilst the emphasis is on services for everyone, it recognizes the different needs of families: ‘Families have distinctly different needs, both between different families, in different locations and across time in the same family. Services should recognise and respond to those varying needs.’ However, our research indicates that Sure Start services are rarely known about by prisoners’ families; consultations with Sure Start practitioners have identified examples of good practice but on the whole they are not reaching offender parents in a significant way. Sure Start local programmes however, are not targeted on specific groups and are demand or needs led. The National Evaluation of Sure Start has been in place for three years (but focuses only on a sample of Sure Start local programmes). It concluded that Sure Start was struggling to meet the needs of diverse groups: ‘Sure Start local programmes are making diverse and sustained efforts to reach their target communities without reaching the whole community, although in general are not doing so.’

Naomi Eisenstadt, Chief Executive of Sure Start was invited to comment on this report and replied:

‘Services are universal for all families in the area and this will of course include prisoners’ families who often do not live near the prison itself. But there are limitations to what the local programmes can do on a national scale. There is not complete coverage of the country and programmes were set up as area-based initiatives to work with all families in a defined geographical area. A great deal has been learnt from these programmes about the delivery of integrated services for young children and families. Based on their experience we have developed the children’s centre model which will deliver integrated early education and childcare for pre-school children together with health and family support services. The Government’s long-term aim is for a children’s centre in every community so that all families, including those where one parent is in prison, can access good quality, family focused, appropriate services.’

Sure Start Plus

Sure Start Plus is a pilot set up in 20 areas of England with high rates of teenage pregnancy, to support pregnant teenagers and teenage parents under 18. It was launched in April 2001. Its aims include improving health, education and social outcomes for pregnant teenagers, teenage parents and their children. It provides specifically tailored support to young parents to help with healthcare during and after pregnancy, parenting skills and support, practical housing and benefits assistance, access to education, training work and childcare, and group and one to one sessions. Sure Start Plus and Connexions are committed to working together and are engaged in collaborative work with other agencies. There is no specific commitment for Sure Start Plus to work with young offenders and their families.
Connexions

Connexions provides all 13-19 year olds (in England) with access to advice, guidance, support and personal development opportunities and could provide support to young parents. It is a radical new approach to supporting and guiding young people through teenage years, so that they will make the best possible transition to adulthood. At the heart of Connexions is a network of personal advisers providing young people with access to help they need at, the time they need it. Young people have been closely involved in setting up the service and deciding how it will work. Youth services also play an important role in supporting and co-ordinating the ongoing involvement of young people. Young people are now involved at all levels – as members of Boards of Governors and of separate Youth Shadow Boards. They also help to select Personal Advisers and monitor and evaluate the service in action. This structure appears to be valued by young people, and young offenders we spoke to seemed to perceive the service as independent and different from statutory provision.

Connexions Partnerships bring together all the services that help young people and gives young people access to a Personal Adviser. The role of the Personal Adviser is to really get to know the young person and offer appropriate guidance and support. They help guide a young person through difficult choices and help them understand what's on offer, and arrange access to specialist support services, if required. There are 47 Connexions Partnerships based in the same areas as local Learning and Skills Councils. Ofsted is responsible for the inspection of Connexions Partnerships. To date, 24 Ofsted reports have been published. The four partnerships currently being inspected will be the last in the present format. Ofsted is currently developing a new framework for inspection of Children’s services which will cover the work of Connexions Partnerships. These inspections will be called Joint Area Reviews and are expected to start in September 2005.

Connexions works in partnership with local Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinators, Sure Start Plus Advisors in Sure Start Plus areas, Yots, and Drug Action Team workers. They do not duplicate or replace what these organisations are doing. Rather they aim to build on existing practice to provide a coherent and integrated service to all young people.

The work Connexions undertakes with Youth Offending Teams and with the many Youth Justice Board initiatives aims to be pioneering multi-agency support. This includes providing support to young people held in young offender institutions Therefore, as Connexions already had national presence in YOIs they did not participate in our research pilots but did consult with us about their work and plans with YOIs. Since, its conception Connexions has had a strong focus on supporting young offenders and they produced ‘Working Together’ guidance with the YJB.

Connexions Partnerships have developed ways of supporting young offenders who are placed a long way from home and then linking them into support in their home locality. Models developed could be useful for other services, for example Social Services. Through the Connexions approach, the Yot worker from a young person’s home area will continue to act as the young person’s Personal Adviser. However, both the wider Connexions partnership in the young person’s home area (the ‘home partnership’) and the Connexions partnership the (‘host partnership’) will support the Yot worker and institution to make sure that the young person’s training plan reflects long term goals and that they have appropriate support and learning opportunities in custody, and in place on release. The role of host and home partnerships are considered in planning and review meetings. The day to day provision and support for the young person lies more appropriately with the host partnership. The home partnership will have responsibility for supporting the Yot in identifying training needs. The Connexions personal adviser can link the young person with appropriate agencies such as Sure Start. Therefore, the potential support that Connexions can provide for young parents looks very positive and is tailored to their needs and situation.
**Home Start**
Home Start is unique in its focus on families with under fives. Individuals may be referred by a health professional. Volunteers respond to a parent’s particular needs and each volunteer is an experienced parent who provides anything from a listening ear to an extra pair of hands. Parents are usually visited for a couple of hours per week in their homes. As well as support in homes they offer family groups, drop in sessions, and parenting groups. Volunteers help parents through difficulties including isolation, domestic violence, post-natal illness, poverty and children’s behavioral problems. Because of the nature of the service and its independence from statutory provision, it may be suitable for supporting both partners of young offenders during a custodial period and young parents themselves following release from custody. There is no way of measuring its level of involvement with offender families. Consultation with the Chief Executive of Home Start did indicate that participation from this group is likely to be low and did demonstrate a clear enthusiasm for further development in this area.

**CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY – SERVICE PROVISION FOR YOUNG PARENTS**

**Criminal Justice Services**
- Our survey with the National Probation Service demonstrates there is no routine data collection on parental status, no members of staff with overall responsibility for multi-agency work with parents, and little emphasis on family work generally. The panel interviews reveal that in order to work with imprisoned parents’ families it would need to be strategically clear how this fits with the resettlement agenda, and this may require a cultural shift and further staff training. The YJB has not considered the needs of offender parents specifically. The Yots survey reveals that they do not routinely record data on parental status but they would refer young parents on to specialist agencies when possible. Young parents appear to be low on the priority agenda for criminal justice service providers.

**Family/Welfare Services**
- Both the Teenage Pregnancy Unit and Sure Start services have within their remit work with juveniles and young offenders. To date progress has been slow. Sure Start and Sure Start Plus work in defined geographical areas with high levels of deprivation or teenage pregnancies.
- Connexions Personal Advisers are now based in all YOIs. They do not have a programme of specific support to young parents, that are linked, through partnerships, to a range of services that can provide support. They have also developed ways of supporting those who are placed a long way from home, linking them to support in their home locality.
In the Community
Chapter Three
Support in the Community and alternatives to Custody

Our research found that young parents at risk in the community receive only a patchy response to their needs.

ACCESS TO MAINSTREAM HEALTH / SEXUAL HEALTH SERVICES

In the introduction we highlighted the fact that young disadvantaged parents and young parents in the CJS are unlikely to have used mainstream community support and family services prior to custody. What is more, several studies have found that young people have historically had poor relationships with health services. Fathers have felt marginalized and ignored and health visitors rarely embrace work with young fathers, many do not have the skills or training to engage with young men. Black and minority ethnic groups are least likely to access these services. The Social Exclusion Unit found that ‘sexual health services were frequently not designed in a way that would reach specific minority ethnic groups.’ (Social Exclusion Unit, 1999).

Many young parents fear being judged and stigmatised by statutory health services and feel their particular needs are not addressed or met. Most of these young people have had bad experiences with statutory services and are reluctant to seek help as they felt this might lead to the removal of their children:

‘Young offenders, rough sleepers, those involved in drug use, care leavers and other marginalized young people present unique challenges in the provision of health care, particularly in terms of access. Mothers who themselves have had poor experiences of parenting may be the least likely to receive advice. Women threatened with having their children taken into care may distrust services and feel inhibited from seeking help.’ (Bailey, 2004)

WORK WITH DISADVANTAGED YOUNG PEOPLE

Below are some examples of preventative projects designed specifically to work with young disadvantaged people. By engaging and working with young parents on the roles and responsibilities of parenthood and how their actions impact on their children, this may enable preventative non-custodial options to be considered more by courts.

Often professionals are not aware of all the services or projects available locally or nationally. Good links between agencies such as the Teenage Pregnancy Unit and the YJS are important so that work done with young offenders can be broadened to include preventative work about their sexual health combined with work on ‘being a parent’ and what this entails. Once they are parents, both agencies need to work with them, engaging them with the necessary support services.

Dorset Youth Offending Team
They ran a pilot project ‘Parenting Positively’ in March 2003 with years 10 and 11 in Pupil Referral Units. Many of these young people were experiencing difficult relationships with, and receiving poor role modelling from, their parents. Rather than focusing on the individual’s experience, as many of the participants had received counselling or social services intervention throughout
their lives, the aim of the workshop was to look at tools that would encourage the young people to believe that they could be effective parents themselves and to put these across in an exciting and thought provoking way. The programme for the day was as follows:

*What is a Mum? What is a Dad? What is a Family? Building Robots – Ideal Mum, Ideal Dad, Ideal Family Communicating, Trusting – seeing things differently*

**Young Mothers Initiative, Fife Council**

The Young Mother’s Initiative began in 1993 as a pilot project to develop a support service for schoolgirl mothers. The project was funded by the Local Education Authority, but had the backing and co-operation of professionals within Health and Social Services. Although there were difficulties initially, response to the project was very positive and many young mothers were able to attend school. On average 30 girls are referred in any one year.

The aims of the project were to:

- Actively encourage all schoolgirl mothers to access the wealth of opportunities available within mainstream schools.
- Provide practical support to enable young mothers to attain their highest educational level.
- Provide information on a wide range of issues to enable young mothers to make more informed choices about their future.
- Provide opportunities which enable young mothers to develop their confidence, both as learners and as parents.

Practical help is also on offer i.e. childcare, transport and additional tuition if needed. Out of school, girls can make use of the group support on offer. Groups meet to discuss issues of mutual interest and talk to specialists such as midwives, health visitors, benefits advisers, careers advisers and New Deal Advisers.

**Nottingham City Sure Start**

Nottingham City Sure Start programme identified provision for young parents in the CJS as an area of increasing need. A joint City / County Group has been established to consider the issues for young parents in custody. The group is chaired by the Sure Start Plus Programme Manager and has the support of Connexions, County Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinator, City and County YOT, Sure Start Plus, LSC, Probation Services, City PCT and youth services. The work they plan to undertake includes:

- Early identification of teenage parents who are offending and at risk of imprisonment.
  (Yot teams to collect data on numbers of young parents and for this to become a mandatory requirement).
- Influencing what is in pre-sentence reports and offering alternatives to custody for young parents (ISSP, tagging etc and making sure courts are aware).
- Where custodial sentences are likely they aim to influence location in order to maintain family ties, ensuring support is in place (and include transport for visits, accompanied visits, assistance with letter writing, reading for those with literacy difficulties, recording of stories, support groups for partners including advice on benefits, housing, Parenting Programme opportunities in prisons).

**Practice Issues**

The Teenage Pregnancy Unit held two national ‘Promising Practice’ seminars in March 2002 and identified key factors for successful practice in prevention work with teenage boys and girls. Information can be found on www.teenagepregnancyunit.gov.uk.
Preventative work with young mothers

In addition to being a young mother, many women may be coping with a range of other issues such as:

- Difficult or violent family backgrounds
- Experiences of abuse, rape and violence
- Involvement in crime
- Alcohol and drug problems
- Recent arrival as an Asylum Seeker/Refugee
- Living in poverty and lack of experience in budgeting/paying bills
- Limited educational achievement related to poor school attendance or interrupted education

These issues influence the young mother’s emotional well-being. Therefore, the young women may need practical, ante natal/post natal, educational and a range of emotional support.

Joining up services and developing a structure

There is a need for multi-agency work in this area and for links to be made with ante-natal/post-natal services, housing services, Connexions, childcare providers, benefits advisers and specialist agencies such as refugee agencies. A successful project requires a good management structure with clear leadership to initiate and maintain the work. This includes managers who are able to listen and take on new ideas in this innovative area of work. Resources need to be stable (including funding and staff) in order to develop and maintain relationships with the young people. Flexibility of funding is also necessary so that it can adapt to the needs of the programme. The accommodation in which a project is based is important. If possible it is useful to be part of a bigger project, which gives the young women easy access to other services e.g. education/training courses.

Service delivery

Young women should be involved in the design of the service/project. It is important that childcare is available on site, as many young mothers want to be near their children. It is important to develop an atmosphere where the young women can share their experiences and develop support networks. One way of doing this is to provide a box for anonymous suggestions for issues which can be discussed in group sessions. Discussions could be based on themes developed by television soaps such as EastEnders, on a one-to-one basis, individual counselling, mentoring or group work. Young women need incentives to attend, such as provision of food, vouchers, certificates of attendance, accreditation and travel costs.

It can be difficult for young mothers to move onto using other support for parents in the community. If the project is time limited this needs to be made clear from the start and plans made to prepare for moving on. Involving other services in the project makes for an easier transition. Therefore it is essential that a project is well connected with other agencies in order to refer people on to useful services.

Staffing

- Staff will need to be able to build and sustain relationships with young women many of whom are vulnerable. Staff need to understand young people and their needs and be committed to the work.
- Staff teams should be representative of the communities they serve in terms of gender, languages spoken and ethnicity.
- A consistent staff team and a consistent approach based on unconditional support for the young mothers is important to enable them to know what to expect and to build their self-confidence and esteem.
- Staff must have ongoing supervision and training.

YWCA Vineries Young Women’s Centre Drop In support

The YWCA Vineries Young Women’s Centre, housed in purpose-built premises, was set up in Dagenham, Essex, as part of the YWCA’s network of youth and community projects. Its aim from
the outset has been to provide a community resource for young women – a safe place where they could meet locally and develop their own programmes to help them fulfil their potential in education and employment.

In addition to the drop in facility, Vineries offers a range of services for young women and their children including education and training courses, an evening project for 14-25 year olds, young women’s groups led by qualified youth workers, teenage mothers and a mothers to be group, a baby sitting course and a mother and toddlers group. The centre has a well-equipped crèche staffed by qualified childcare workers who care for the children when their mothers are involved in activities.

The drop in facility is available twice a week and is often the first point of contact for the centre users. It is a useful way for staff to build up a trusting relationship with new users who can, when they are ready, join other programmes run by the centre. Users normally find out about the drop in either through other service users or word of mouth.

The staff have found that young mothers are particularly wary of anything labelled ‘parenting’ because of how they have been seen and stigmatised as a ‘problem’ by health and social care professionals. The programme consists of arts and crafts, educational games, first aid demonstrations and discussions on health and parenting issues. The staff believe that imparting parenting education is more effective through informal structures. The project has succeeded in involving isolated, younger mothers.

**Northolt Young Women’s Project (NYWP)**

The NYWP is also a YWCA youth and community project. Its aim is to enable girls and young women aged 11-25 years to reach their full potential, focusing on the needs of the vulnerable and isolated. The project offers a wide range of services in a multi-cultural setting, such as facilitated groups for young mothers, drop in facilities for girls at lunchtimes and after school, personal, health and social education for girls excluded from school. Users find out about the project through word of mouth or through local agencies. Details of women aged 21 and under who were due to give birth were also given to the project by nearby Ealing Hospital. This meant the project was able to contact them directly.

The NYWP provides a well-equipped crèche which runs alongside all its other activities, in order to ensure that women can fully participate and that their pre school children can benefit from creative activities and socialising with other children.

The approach to parenting support was about engaging with women and helping them to address the problems they face, many of which are around parenting.

The group followed a set programme, facilitated by qualified youth workers. The size of the group was kept deliberately small, in order to foster a closer working relationship between users and the facilitator. The key aims of the programme were:

- Providing a safe environment for young mothers to meet and socialise
- Enabling the women to consider long term options
- Helping women to take a positive interest in child development and independence
- Providing information and guidance on other services, in order to prepare users to move on to other projects more appropriate to their needs.

**Parr Young Women’s Centre**

The YWCA Parr Young Women’s Centre (PYWC) is integral to the local community in St Helens, Merseyside. Project staff consulted widely with local young women and other service providers to explore the unmet needs of young mothers. The main finding of the consultation was that
young mothers needed support with parenting. They were reluctant to approach mainstream agencies and keen to continue their education so they could take advantage of employment opportunities.

The A20 course, which was one of the YWCA's original, national projects, was enhanced by the project to meet both sets of needs: help young mothers find their own route into formal education and/or the job market, and help them improve their parenting skills. The staff felt confident that they had reached isolated and marginalised teenage mothers, who other agencies had failed to engage with.

Preventative work with young fathers

Work with young men and young fathers should be part of mainstream work on teenage pregnancy and parenthood and not an optional extra. Some services are keen to engage fathers, but have difficulty attracting them. Some services have tried couples evenings, as men are sometimes unable to attend during the day. Difficulties may arise if a young woman's partner is not the biological father of the child, but may have taken on the father role.

For many young men the important things in their lives are their lifestyles, growing up, self-image and self-esteem. Disadvantaged young men may engage in high risk-taking behaviour, have low emotional literacy, low motivation, low levels of educational attainment, suffer from depression, and place an over-emphasis on material wealth. Projects need to recognise this before tackling issues such as parenting. Projects need to be broader than just giving information on contraception. They need to be flexible enough to respond to individuals and to work with young men in the context of their lifestyles.

It can be problematic working with young men who did not want to be fathers – the pregnancy was unplanned or they may have wanted the young woman to have a termination. Some young men may have very strong anti-termination views. There is very little support for young men dealing with the issue of termination. Research indicates that where the young man is involved in decisions about the pregnancy, even if he does not get his preferred choice, he is more able to cope with the outcome.

Multi-agency working is important to ensure links with mainstream provision. Services should be based on the young men's needs and developed in consultation with them so that they can be involved in developing the project/service. A number of factors can influence young men's attendance at a project/service such as distance, transport, and amount of free time, confidence, and explaining to parents/peers where they are going.

Outreach work is important - going out to find the young men in environments they feel comfortable. The first ante natal sessions may have young fathers attending and may be an opportunity to reach them. If appropriate, incentives such as travel expenses/travel cards, phone vouchers, and free childcare facilities should be provided to encourage young men to attend. It can take time to develop relationships with boys and young men. It can take the length of a programme to engage them and to get them to trust the workers.

There are creative and fun ways of attracting and engaging young men such as music, art and sport. Other ideas for working with young men include encouraging them to bring their friends along to the services and giving out free condoms. As the trust of the young men is built up they may ask questions and start to talk. It is important to maximise any contact with them.

Group work can be combined with one-to-one support. Using both approaches may enable the young men to maintain their image in the group and deal with sensitive issues in one-to-one sessions. However, group work can be used to help them discuss embarrassing and sensitive subjects with their peers. Both approaches can help develop young men’s emotional literacy. Positive images of boys and
young men need to be displayed. Messages and interventions aimed at young men should be gender positive rather than gender negative.

Staff need to be comfortable working with young men and to believe the work is worthwhile. It is important that staff understand their own feelings and fears around masculinity and identity before they can effectively engage and understand the young men that they work with. Flexibility, empathy, enthusiasm, commitment, energy, a level of personal honesty and a good sense of humour are all necessary attributes to work with young men. Young men can sometimes feel threatened by female staff and may be less likely to engage with them. It is useful to have sessions run by male and female staff. Young men want staff who respect confidentiality, understand youth culture, are non-judgemental and treat each young person as an individual. (www.teenagepregnancy unit.gov.uk)

Below are some examples of projects run in the community with involvement from the Teenage Pregnancy Unit. The intention of the TPU projects are to inform planning and provision.

The Health Development Agency was asked to identify those projects, which through monitoring and evaluation were successful in some way, to learn from them and disseminate that learning. The projects mentioned below demonstrate some creative ways to engage with young men and, more particularly, young fathers. Fuller descriptions of the projects, the background and context of their achievements, key learning objectives, and contact details can be found in the appendix.

**Dads and Lads / YMCA**
The Home Office Family Policy Unit has awarded the YMCA a grant for its ‘Dad’s and Lads’ programme which aims to strengthen the role of the father in young peoples’ lives. As well as providing a dedicated worker they provide training to local authorities and charities. A members only website allows youth workers to share best practice and parenting materials and short videos will soon be available on the site. The project involves young fathers in activities such as football and then tries to engage them in parenting sessions. It was set up because young fathers rarely access parenting initiatives.

**boys2MEN Project - Coram Leaving Care Services, London**
boys2MEN is a project working with disaffected young men (especially those from black and minority ethnic groups) and fathers who are considered to be ‘at risk’ or ‘in need’ or who have been in care. Providing a range of group work programmes, the project aims to support them from boyhood to manhood and in so doing help them realise their potential as responsible adults and caring fathers. The project uses a combination of music, video work, drama, poetry, photography and outward bound residential trips as well as one-to-one support from group facilitators and mentors. It also uses Life Experience; experiential group-based discussions that assist group members to make sense of some of their life experiences, many of which will have been negative, and to draw positive learning experiences from them.

**Running the Risk – Birmingham**
There are two main strands to this project:

Outreach work with young men in various accessible locations and training, advice and consultancy to professional staff who work with or provide services to young men. The Project Worker visits youth centres, schools, churches, young offender groups, and other places where young men are likely to meet in order to promote sexual health. He meets with the young men for several sessions at a time (each session lasts around three hours, but the exact number of sessions depends on their need). Various workshops have been run on the sexual health theme including the production of a music CD, where young men perform music that they have written
and produced themselves. Drama workshops are also run to explore the themes of sexual health, relationships and fatherhood. Peer education training is in the preliminary stages.

The second strand of the project involves delivering training to front-line workers in statutory and voluntary organisations, which provide services to, or work directly with, young men. These workers include staff working in schools, theatre companies, Yots, church youth groups as well as youth workers, doctors, staff in Genito Urinary Medicine (GUM) clinics and Brook Advisory Centres.

**Man Enough!**

Man Enough! is a parenting support project for fathers based in Oxford that runs in local schools and in Bullingdon Prison. The YWCA team evaluated the group at Bullingdon Prison. The project entails a voluntary 10 week parenting course for fathers. In addition there are regular support groups to provide further back up. These run both in the prison and in Oxford.

The approach, as described by the facilitator, is therapeutic. The emphasis is on feelings, communication and understanding oneself. The programme covers active listening and responding, to see how the participants handled difficult parenting situations and why those situations arose. Role playing is used in group work, allowing participants to rehearse situations which might arise.

**Hackney Young Families Support Service**

This project aims to promote the health and well-being of pregnant teenagers and young parents (the majority of whom are single mothers) under the age of 19 in Hackney, east London. The project also works with young fathers and with the parents of the teenage parents if this is deemed appropriate. It provides community-based support. The project provides advocacy, counselling, advice, information, family work and practical as well as therapeutic support in order to meet the needs of pregnant young people and young parents. Project staff can attend case conferences, provide parenting and relationship skills support, co-ordinate asylum applications, accompany young people to benefits and housing appointments, attend careers sessions, and help young people move into hostels.

There are three full-time family support co-ordinators with a caseload of 15 young people. These workers carry out outreach work in addition to holding drop-in sessions. The co-ordinators work closely with young people to identify their specific needs and develop a work plan with them. In addition to one-to-one work, the project runs formal and informal groups (providing education, support and social networks), community-based advice sessions/drop-ins (where young people can receive advice and support without appointments) and professional multi-disciplinary forums (which provide information and networking opportunities for professionals working with young families).
PREPARATION BEFORE CUSTODY

Arrest
Many arrests take place at night with children often present. The impact on, and aftermath for children can be traumatic. Police should have clear protocols for what to do if arrests take place with children there. Where arrest does take place in the home they should be informed in advance about the care responsibilities of the parent and what action they need to take. Parents should be allowed to speak to children within 24 hours of arrest. There are currently no protocols concerned with arrest when children are in the house.

Preparing for court
Information to families should be routinely available at each point in the CJS, which is currently not the case. If custody could be the outcome of a court case, preparation work should be done with the young person and their family by Yots, offender managers and Social Services to ensure that the child's best interests can be maintained and that any partner or family left caring for the child has as much information as possible about what support and advice is available.

Discussion can begin with the young parent and their family about how they plan to maintain contact with their child whilst in custody. Information on organisations such as Action for Prisoners’ Families should be given as well as any local support organisations. Liaising regularly with the families of the young person going to custody may really help them and the young person to maintain family relationships, which are crucially important in helping to cope with a sentence and reduce the risk of further offending.

It is important to help them to maintain their role as a parent in as useful and constructive way as is possible given their absence whilst in custody. Ability to do this will depend heavily on good relationships between families and partners so that they can assist in maintaining positive contact between young parents and their children. Quotes from young fathers in our research illustrate the level of concern for children during the court and sentencing process.

‘Basically all that morning from the time I got up I thought of the kids. Even when I was sentenced that’s all I could think about. When I was sitting in the dock and the judge started to read the sentence and she just came into me mind that I knew I would not be there for her or would bring her up the way I should.
(Young father)

Support from statutory agencies for families of prisoners is thin on the ground. Even where it is available, young parents are reluctant to engage with agencies which may impede or prevent access to their children. More work needs to be done to build positive working relationships between agencies and young parents before and during custody. This will influence whether they access and seek support from those agencies on release.

Preparing court and sentencing reports
Prison comes as a great shock to many people. If remanded there is often not the time or prior knowledge of this to prepare young people, their families and children. There is also a lot of uncertainty and strain on everyone concerned whilst waiting for dates of court cases to come round and for the sentencing outcome.

People can be on remand for lengthy periods of time. As soon as someone goes into custody it is essential that a designated person takes responsibility for informing families/partners, discussing what has happened, giving information and offering support and advice where required. Similarly, if this support is offered, and involvement with families takes place prior to sentencing, Yots and offender...
managers would be better equipped to prepare pre-court reports that take account of the likely impact of custody on the family, particularly the children:

‘I was there for the birth, but all the time she was pregnant I felt dodgy knowing I was going to be sentenced. All the time I kept thinking would I be there? – Would I be a proper dad – how can I be?’

‘My girlfriend was in court with me. That was awful. I felt I had let them down.’

‘I didn’t know how I was going to cope and she thought the same.’

(Young fathers)

Care arrangements for children

There have been numerous cases of people going into custody without the time to sort out adequate childcare. Going to prison is extremely stressful and the added stress for parents of not knowing who is caring for their children, and how sensitively the situation has been explained to their children needs to be dealt with as a matter of urgency by one of the key agencies. Many of the young people interviewed for this project, particularly mothers, had made no care arrangements for their children prior to sentencing. They had been offered no support or advice and were not given the opportunity to check on their children and explain the situation to them. We also had many calls from professionals during the course of the project asking for basic information such as how to apply to Mother and Baby Units, and whether the mother would have any say in care arrangements if sentenced.

Adrienne Katz, in her book ‘Parenting Under Pressure’ (2003) also found that often ad hoc, informal care arrangements are set up. These arrangements are not subject to the same thorough checking that fostering or adoption arrangements are given. Female prisoners in particular report high levels of abuse in their own childhoods and many worry that their child is being sent to live with the same abusive family as they had. Our research found that Social Services sometimes do surprisingly minimal checks on carers of arrested parents. Checks can be as basic as making sure those carers have a suitable space or bed for the child. Children seldom have a say in where they are sent to live or with whom. Their right to education can also be disrupted if they are frequently moved. What is more, their privacy may be invaded by reports in the media of the crime committed by a relative; some speak of the shame resulting from media reporting which can make them feel suicidal. Yots and NOMS need to make sure that appropriate agencies are supporting and caring for prisoners’ children. As part of their planning work with the young person before they go into custody they could find out from the prison the young person is going to what parenting support is on offer. This can then be built in from the beginning in any sentence planning.

Some young people have no real support network. They may be estranged from family and have been in care. The importance for these young people of having somebody who will visit regularly, advocate on their behalf and help them maintain contact with their children cannot be overstated.

ALTERNATIVES TO CUSTODY FOR YOUNG PARENTS

Whilst the focus of the action research undertaken was on young parents in custody, one of the objectives of the YPP project was to campaign and lobby for the use of alternatives to custody, particularly for young parents. Our aim was to press for community penalties to include parenting education and appropriate support services for young parents.

So far there have been very few good practice examples of community programmes/penalties that specifically include parenting education and support. Our surveys of both Yots and Probation Services,
who would be working with those on Community Orders, revealed that parenting support and work with young parents is a low priority. However, both Yots and Probation Services are able to refer clients on to parenting agencies as part of a wider package of support.

**Support for the increased use of community penalties**

There is growing evidence that the general public would support the increased use of community penalties. Rethinking Crime and Punishment (RCP, 2003) has conducted research with the general public which demonstrates huge support for an extension of community penalties. More than half of those polled would prefer tougher community punishments to be developed (Cited in RCP, 2003). Nine out of ten agree that there should be more use of intensive community punishments to keep track of young offenders (RCP 2002 a). Recent research by MORI for the Fawcett Commission on Women and the Criminal Justice System found that 82 per cent of the public would favour more treatment centres for women with mental health problems and 74 per cent were in favour of more residential work with drug users.

**How likely are policy makers to support a move to increased use of community penalties for young parents?**

The new Women's Offending Reduction Programme WORP, (Home Office, 2004e) recognises that custody is increasingly used for women offenders. One of its central aims is to make community interventions and programmes more appropriate and accessible for women, particularly mothers. Until recently the numbers of women on community punishment orders has been low. There has been no development of policy to address the specific problems that women experience when on community penalty orders – child care, inappropriate work, insufficient female supervisors and sexual harassment. Worrall, (2003) also found that programmes designed specifically for women can have greater difficulties receiving accreditation:

> Programmes designed specifically for women are having greater difficulty obtaining accreditation. In order to be accredited programmes are required to meet eleven very specific criteria which demand clarity. The West Mercia community-based programme for women, chosen as an original pathfinder and highly praised in PRT’s ‘Justice for Women’ report was rejected by the panel as lacking focus on factors to do with offending.’
> (Cited in Worrall, 2003).

The move towards greater use of community penalties, particularly for mothers, seems positive. However, there is a contradiction in Government policy; at the same time the WORP programme was launched, some specialist centres for women have closed and the first privately-run women’s prison, Bronzefield in Ashford Middlesex, opened (PRT, 2004d – July Factfile).

One of the central aims of the YJB was to reduce the numbers of young people in custody. Any reduction in custodial numbers will release considerable resources for prevention and early intervention work. Over three quarters of its budget is currently spent on custodial accommodation. In order to re-direct it’s budget it needs to improve the credibility of community penalties overall.
'The re-offending rate for young people given community sentences is 60% compared to 88% for those sent to young offender institutions. (Auditor General, 2003-2004)

So far the positive evidence that community penalties can be effective has not been widely available. The YJB has announced that it is set to cut the number of places in Local Authority Secure Centres and increase the number of places in privately run STCs, which could lead to greater use of custody for this group. In addition, it has announced the expansion of accommodation for juvenile girls including mother and baby units, which effectively increases the use of custodial options for young mothers. The Home Office paper – ‘Juvenile Justice - The Next Steps’, (Home Office, 2003d) contained few proposals for reducing the numbers of young mothers in custody. There was little focus on wider community alternatives such as mentoring schemes, intensive fostering, family support work, restorative justice programmes and the development of small specialist units.

The YJB has now announced a major consultation on custodial provision and made a clear commitment to reduce the numbers of children held in prison by 10 per cent. However, overall it is fair to say that the Government has been slow to develop specific community programmes for parents.

More positively, the needs of young parents’ and offenders’ children are higher on the political agenda and awareness has increased. There are some encouraging signs that community options might be used more readily for parents, and particularly mothers, in the future.

STORIES FROM YOUNG MOTHERS WHO SERVED A COMMUNITY ORDER

The stories below are all from mothers who received Community Orders rather than prison sentences. Whilst they do not refer specifically to parenting support, the stories graphically illustrate that multi-agency support can be far better provided in the community.

(Theses stories are taken from The Staffordshire Case Study Project, which works in the West Midlands Region.)

**Hannah’s story**

*A heroin mother*

‘Mummy, mummy, why are you always asleep?’
‘Mummy, mummy, why don’t you take me out?’
‘Mummy, mummy, why are the police here?’
‘Mummy, mummy, why did the lady take me away?’
‘Mummy, mummy, when can I come home?’
‘Wake up Mummy, pleeeaaase’
‘Mummy’s just tired sweetie, go and play while mummy smokes just one more cigarette.’

It was February 3rd when I knew I’d face losing her. The police raided me. I was just bagging up stuff for some people I knew. Nothing heavy. But I still lost custody of her. A drugs ring? Well yes, I guess that’s what I was involved in. They paid me in drugs. Seemed fair enough. How else was I going to pay for my gear? At least I never had to steal from my family like most others do. I was going to plead not guilty – but my solicitor advised me not to. I was done for intent to supply class A drugs – on two counts – one for heroin and another for crack cocaine.

**What heroin gave me**

I got to weigh six stone without going on the Atkins Diet
I got to weigh six stone by lying on the sofa all day long
I got big dark rimmed eyes without having to buy any make-up
I got hollow cheekbones – without having to suck them in
I got to look dead pale – without being at all interesting

But it didn’t get me a bloke. Not a decent one anyway. That side of things slips away when you smoke crack, heroin and skunk all day long. And who’d want someone who was slowly rotting herself away?
I’m changing the bait now though. I managed to keep my teeth okay though, ‘cos I didn’t do foil. But I did get my dad back in my life after years of not seeing him. After the raid he took my daughter in for five months so she didn’t have to go into care – until I got custody of her back again. Mum has a job and so couldn’t look after her.

My mum and dad split up when I was four. Mum was always fighting him for custody. I’d stay with her at weekends. Just me, not my brother. I’d lived with Dad and stepbrothers until I was 15, then I went to live with my mum. I was 19 when I left mum’s. I got pregnant and moved in with my daughter’s father. We broke up in 1998 when she was six.

Why did I start on drugs?
I don’t know why I started on drugs. Her dad was into drugs. The crowd we knew were into them too. I’d smoked cannabis since I was 15 – but I don’t count that. I still don’t know why I started on drugs.
It was 1998 when I started on hard drugs. I used on and off at first. It was around the time when I became a single parent on benefits. A £15 bag would last me for two or three days. I got £91 a week. I don’t smoke or run a car or go out much. I managed.

I wanted to be at home for my daughter, not out working. I’ve been on my own with her for seven years now. I never did did well at school. I think my best GCSE result was an ‘F’ in English. I left at 16 and worked in catering, in McDonalds and places like that.

There’s no one reason why I started on drugs.
Well, yes, I suppose after a while I got a habit I couldn’t afford and started working for the ring. But I don’t want to talk about that just now.

She never missed school, I made sure of that. Always fed her a dinner and got her clothes ready.

What made me change?
It was the day of the police raid. My last smoke of heroin was two days after that.
Losing custody of my daughter.
The thought of dying and leaving her behind and not seeing her.
The way people looked at me like I was lowlife scum not worth keeping alive.
The way I couldn’t go out of the house because I felt so paranoid about other people looking at me. I cleaned myself up. If I went to prison then I’d be affecting my daughter’s life too much.

In court the Judge said I’d been trying hard and the DTTO would be worth trying. I had to report to the probation office five times a week for the first few months. I was drug tested twice a week until I’d proved I could be trusted to stay clean. I went to a drug treatment centre too. I had to go back to court every month for a progress report.

I wouldn’t go and see my mum because I didn’t want the earache she’d give me. I just used to drop off my daughter to stay with her and leave.
I didn’t mix. I lost contact with friends and family. All I’d got was drugs. I mixed with other addicts but I didn’t like them much.
I got agoraphobia – crack makes you so paranoid.
Coming off drugs
I just came off it cold. I got myself back onto the straight and narrow.
I went to the doctor who did blood and urine tests to prove I was staying clean.

My dad and my step mum fed me dinners and sat up with me. They really helped, my step mum. especially. I’m really grateful to them. I was vulnerable and needed help. I stayed with them for three weeks while I got through it. We see each other regularly now.
I couldn’t face methadone. From what I’ve seen the rattle people do coming off that is worse than on the gear.

Getting back into society
Get qualifications.
Get a job.
Eat properly.
Do proper mothering, go to parks, walks, ice skating.

I’m getting back on track with all this now.
I got sentenced to a Drug Treatment and Testing Order (DTTO). A probation officer assessed me and said they thought I’d do okay on it. I was spared prison - because I could show the court I was getting clean.
I get tested for drugs twice a week. I’m the only one in our group on the DTTO that’s completely clean – the others are on methadone. The groups are a bit like AA groups. You sit in a circle and talk. They are quite good. I’ve been on it for three months now.

The big thing for me has been doing basic skills with probation. I’m not too bad with my English, reading and writing. But maths I struggle with. I still feel funny walking into places where I don’t know anybody. My confidence has had a huge knock so it’ll take a while to build it up.

How to think yourself out of drugs: I hope this helps other people:
Sort your head out first and then you’ll be okay.
Start thinking properly – you don’t need it.
Get through a few weeks of feeling bad, just a bit of pain. Maybe six weeks max.
Don’t blame no-one. Repeat don’t blame.

Then that’s it. It’s up to me from here on. And it gets better. Get back into society.
I look at my daughter and she’s here with me.
I’m 30. I’m not going to die. I weigh nine stone again and feel good. I’m okay.
So I’m going to go for it.
I hope you get there too.
I went to a parents evening recently. My daughter got an excellent report. She is doing well with her schoolwork and is happy and chatty in the classroom. All the teachers were pleased with her.
So we must have got back on the right track.
**Suzanne’s story**

I felt totally crushed as a person. It was like I was addicted to him and did whatever he said rather than risk losing him. And the worse he treated me, the more I clung to him. He wanted to control me so much; that he wouldn’t even let me breastfeed Chloe. We got into bad debt. And I was so lonely that anyone was better than no-one.

Chloe was put on the ‘at risk’ register; later interim care orders were made for her. I had to call out the police a lot and he was arrested about nine times and finally got sentenced. Sometimes I was hurt so bad I couldn’t go out of the house. There were lots of court orders banning him from the house or coming near me.

And can you believe I still used to sneak him into the house?

Due to drinking I’ve got two convictions, one for assaulting a police officer and another for causing affray. Looking back, I’m only 23, but I’m surprised that’s all I got done for. Probably the One to One probation programme I had to attend, as part of my order has been what’s helped make me see sense. Alongside nearly having Chloe taken off me.

I realise now that I do have choices. And if I want to be nothing, go to prison, lose my child and family – then I can just carry on – it’s my choice. Chloe deserves better. I deserve better. I might have had problems in the past but I don’t have to be like that now.

I went down the wrong path. I wasn’t supervised when I was young, Chloe’s only four but I’m going to make sure that when she gets in from school then I’ll be there and she’ll be supervised.

And I’m going to see that she gets included in activities such as ballet, gym and swimming so she has other interests, and learns decent ways of interacting with other people, socialising in a way that is acceptable and doesn’t leave her vulnerable.

I was six when mum and dad split up. Mum had to look after my sister and I on her own. She worked full time shift work, which sometimes involved night work, so we were left on our own a lot. I’m not blaming her, she was only a teenager when she had my sister and I came along a few years later. But what’s happened can’t be undone now.

When I was about 13 we moved house five times in 18 months. At one time we lived in two rooms in a rented house. That’s when I first shoplifted. I’d already got into cannabis by then. I’d got a job stacking shelves in a local shop and spent my wages on draw (cannabis).

I had to catch two buses to school, which was on the other side of town. This travelling and having no adults at home left me open to meet people that maybe I shouldn’t have. I started breaking into cars and stealing the stereos.

Later I hung round with girls from school. We’d go out drinking and sit in parks being rowdy and verbally abusive to passers-by.

I’ve always been volatile. At school I was a fighter and always in trouble. I was quite quiet and don’t think I went looking for trouble but when anyone upset me then I’d lash out immediately. Sometimes I’d turn up at school really late and really stoned. I thought it was so funny. A group of us were really disruptive. Amazingly I got 10 GCSEs at ‘C’ and ‘D’ grade.
In one of my first full-time shop jobs I put £5 of dope into my boss's coffee and watched her get slowly stoned. They couldn't sack me because I'd already given in my notice. When I was 17 I started seeing a bloke who was 31 and addicted to speed. He was living in a homeless hostel and I used to sneak in and stay with him. I took drugs with him and did other sleazy things. When he was violent to me I left and went back home.

I started training in a specialist type of shop work. Things weren't going well at home and I went to stay with my dad. He got me a car and I learnt to drive. I'd drive round late at night breaking into cars, stealing and damaging people's property. I'd work with a friend and put false number plates on my car and fill up with petrol at garages and drive off without paying. I'd walk into hotels and take handbags – it was so stupid because I didn't even know how to use a credit card. By this time I was back with my mum.

Then I got involved with Simon and as soon as I met him I never wanted to be apart from him. I knew deep down that he was no good but when mum didn't let him stay we left and lived rough together for a while.

Within three months I was pregnant. We both wanted a baby. I was stealing from my work to pay our rent. Money ran out and we were forced into a homeless hostel. The carpets were wet with damp. I just lay in bed all day feeling ill, not eating. When I finally managed to get a flat from the council we were broken into a week later and everything we had was taken.

Once when I was pregnant I confronted him about flirting with someone else and he got so mad he put his foot through my car windscreen. Chloe was born in the New Year of 1999. You can see the bruises on my face on the photos.

It escalated from there on. I ended up living in a safe house. I became estranged from my family because they couldn't understand why I stayed with him. Nor could I. I was at work when Chloe fell and hurt her head and broke her arm. He didn't want me to take her to the hospital and when I did the Social Services got involved. The social workers were on my case all the time, visiting me three times a week and I was told I had to co-operate.

There was another big fight and I got arrested and got done for assault on a police officer. I was locked up for the night and the court gave me a six month Community Rehabilitation Order and £75 fine. But I went back for more and we ended up drunk, kicked out of town centre pubs, fighting in the street. I was charged with affray and got one year's community rehabilitation order and another fine.

No-one would help me anymore. I hit rock bottom.

So I went to Social Services and told them everything that I'd done and said I'd do anything it took to keep Chloe. She was with my mum – who wouldn't let me see her. I had to tell my work all about what had happened – it was so embarrassing. They were supportive in the end though. I think people do want to help you – but only if you show you want to help yourself. Social Services let me keep Chloe in the end.

I changed my way of thinking thanks to Linda, my probation officer. I had a really bad attitude when I first went to the probation office. I just didn't want to be there. I did the One to One Programme, I had to work intensively on my own with Linda. It teaches you to stop and think about the situation before it goes too far. I had to look at my drinking and how
I used anger to respond to problems. I came to really understand that every day you’ve got choices. I’ve got my self esteem back. This is the help I needed to get through what I’ve been through and make some sense of it all. And look at how I can avoid it all again.

Linda gave me handouts to take home, and I do positive thinking, positive self talk. Like ‘I’m not fat’ and ‘I am a good person’. She gave me stickers – with positive writing on them and I’d stick them in the kitchen or on the back of the toilet door.

It was hard at first because I was so lonely. But as I started doing the college course things picked up and I started meeting better people through college. Chloe went in the crèche which was good for her social life

I’ve been doing an NVQ in business administration and holistic therapy and a diploma in anatomy and physiology. The year before I did legal and audio text processing, spreadsheets database, and CLAIT. Chloe starts school next month. Then I’m doing sports therapy and holistic therapy NVQ Level Three. So the future looks bright, I hope to get a career and make something of myself.

I work just four hours a week in a shop because I’m on benefits. And I’m managing. I have a rented place now – it is in one of the best areas in town – what a difference.

My advice to other people in my situation is not to go with the flow, follow your gut feeling, because most of us know right from wrong – I know I did.
CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY - SUPPORT IN THE COMMUNITY

- Young parents are unlikely to have accessed mainstream health and sexual health services prior to custody, particularly those from minority ethnic groups. They fear being stigmatised and judged by these services and need specific interventions designed to meet their needs.

- Some preventative work with young parents at risk of offending does exist, focusing on topics such as the responsibilities of parenthood. However, more effective links need to be made between agencies such as the TPU and CJS to ensure that these non-custodial preventative options for young parents can be considered by courts.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

- Our research showed that whilst there are few specific community interventions for some young parents, Yots and Probation Services will refer young people to appropriate parenting agencies as part of a package of support. We felt that their range of needs can be more adequately met in the community.

- MORI polls have indicated that there is widespread public support for the increased use of alternatives to custody particularly for women and young people.

- The WORP strategy (Home Office, 2004e) aims to increase sentencers’ knowledge of community penalties, particularly those which might be used for mothers. However, Government policy is contradictory; the first private prison for women with a MBU opened in July 2004, whilst therapeutic community provision for women has closed.

- The central aim of the YJB is to reduce the number of young people in custody through preventive and early intervention work and promotion of community penalties. In July 2004 it announced the expansion of secure provision for juvenile girls to prevent their being placed in adult accommodation. These new units will have their own MBUs and this could lead to increased custody for mothers under eighteen.

- There are some confusing messages about whether community alternatives will be increasingly used for parents in the CJS. However, the policy documents referred to in this chapter suggest there has been a policy shift in the this direction.

- Information and support to families at all points in the CJS is minimal, particularly pre-court preparation. No one body is responsible for meeting their needs.

- Pre-court preparation work by offender managers and Yots with young parents should include consideration of childcare arrangements when a custodial sentence is likely, ways that contact can be maintained and the impact of separation on the whole family. All of this information should be included in sentencing reports.

- Social Service procedures for placing children following the imprisonment of a parent are particularly poor. The procedures used for adoption or fostering could be drawn on. Mothers and fathers, are rarely consulted about suitable carers.
In Custody

This section focuses on our research findings with young parents, their families and staff in custodial settings and includes examples of good practice.
Chapter Four

Young Fathers in Custody

KEY FACTS: YOUNG FATHERS IN CUSTODY

- It is estimated that 150,000 children have a parent in prison. Seven per cent of children experience the imprisonment of a father during their school years (DfES, 2003).
- Research has found that 59 per cent of fathers have dependent children under 18 (Hansard, House of Commons, 28th April 2003). The Prison Service does not routinely collect data on the number and age of fathers in prison.
- One in three children witness their father’s arrest (Fisher, D 2003).
- Just over 55 per cent of male prisoners described themselves as living with a partner prior to imprisonment (Home Office, 2001c).
- There are around 109 prison visitors’ centres across England and Wales. The facilities available in visitors’ centres vary considerably across the prison estate (Hansard, House of Commons written answer, November 17th 2003.).
- The Government’s Social Exclusion Unit has found that many families have difficulty getting through to prisons to book visits.

SUPPORT FOR YOUNG FATHERS IN THE COMMUNITY

Many young fathers in custody will have grown up in single parent households and many will have experienced social exclusion and disadvantage, poverty and unemployment. Young fathers in custody are very unlikely to have received parenting support in the community prior to their incarceration. Family services, particularly health and sexual health services have not traditionally targeted or engaged with fathers and they have had a very mother-centred approach which has left many men feeling excluded. This has caused problems for agencies trying to engage fathers released from custody with community support networks. Pollock, (2003), examined healthcare provision for young men and found that there was a striking lack of support from health services for young men preparing for parenthood. While there were examples of good practice, most men felt ignored, marginalized or made uncomfortable by services despite their desire for information and inclusion.

‘Clinic staff often only talked to the mother-to-be and tended not to engage with the prospective father. Interviews with health visitors showed that 53 per cent knew little or nothing about the father. In addition health visitors rarely saw work with young fathers as central to their task and often felt they did not have the skills to engage with young men.’
(Cited in Pollock, 2003)
However, there has been a recent trend among newly formed family and welfare services to extend provision to fathers. Sure Start and The Teenage Pregnancy Unit both have specific targets for engaging with fathers and a range of health service providers are now seeking advice on how best to involve fathers in services and adopt a father-friendly approach. As a result of this, the Family Policy Unit has asked Fathers Direct to develop a set of standards for father-friendly services. David Bartlett from Fathers Direct has concluded that many services are over eager to find quick methods for including fathers. ‘They want to rush in, put up some posters, and hire a male worker. But the principles call for proper groundwork.’ (Bartlett, Cited in O’Sullivan, 2003.)

Bartlett believes that the best way for agencies to include fathers is to review all service provision and ensure that it is accessible to fathers, rather than tagging on specific provision for dads. This finding has been supported by a Sure Start National Evaluation on Fathers (Sure Start, 2003c) which found that father involvement tended to be higher when services had involved fathers from the beginning and made them central to their work at the planning stages.

In contrast to this when young fathers enter the CJS they are provided with a relatively wide range of parenting support initiatives.

‘Prisons are the only place where a resemblance of consistent support for fathers exists; prior to and after prison, fathers can expect no support. However, such support tends not to work well in a vacuum.’ (Fisher, 2003)

To date most parenting training in custody has been targeted at young fathers and has been received positively. However, research demonstrates that whilst this might be the case, it has a limited impact once prisoners are released into the community if there is no post-release support. Gains made are not sustainable because prisoners often leave without a job or a home and they have little money. Ex-prisoners often remember parenting education vividly, but without post-release support, they are unable to realise their aspirations and are likely to fall back into offending.

Research by Dennison, C and Lyon, J in 2003 aimed to evaluate parenting training on offer in YOIs and looked at its impact in the short and long-term as well as the context in which young men undertake these courses. The response of young fathers was positive. However, they said they would not have undertaken a similar course in the community because it would not have been a priority. The effect of the course was often for the men to want more involvement with their child on release, but that also meant not re-offending. Many of the young men had not had positive fathering role models and were adamant that their relationship with their child or children would be different from that with their own fathers.

Most of the young men were determined to ‘be there’ for their child and provide financially for them. They would describe their employment plans which would prevent them re-offending. Follow up interviews with these young fathers showed that the extent to which they realised these intentions varied widely. A number of factors impacted on their involvement with their children after release, the most significant being their relationship with the child’s mother. This was central to whether they were able to have access at all, and if so, in what form and to what extent. Employment and housing status were also significant. If prisoners had a job which meant they could contribute to looking after the child, the mother more readily accepted his place in the relationship.

Other factors that influenced their level of involvement included whether they had contact with peers who were offending and support provided by others. Many of the young men did re-offend. Dennison (2004) concluded that parenting courses for fathers are useful, but their impact is short-lived without other support. The content of these courses can also be rather limited and focus on basic skills such as nappy changing. This evaluation demonstrated the need to broaden the agenda and incorporate the other factors that affect fatherhood such as housing, employment, and building relationships with the child’s mother. These needs could be addressed through the involvement of the voluntary and
statutory sectors and through provision of support during and after custody. The YPP project was established in part to address this gap.

Adrienne Katz carried out research with young offender fathers as part of ‘Parenting Under Pressure’ (Katz, 2003). She found that contact with families outside was very important to ensure fathers were aware of their responsibilities and that institutionalisation allows fathers to abdicate responsibilities, whilst those outside shoulder the consequences of prison. The research also demonstrated that young fathers in custody often had unrealistic views about how it was for their family and how it might be when they are released. There was a huge issue around fathers being absent at birth. Young mothers had undergone a life-changing experience without the fathers, which had many consequences, including making them more pre-disposed to split up.

Offenders wanted to talk to somebody with experience of young fatherhood. Many young men were frightened by the experience of being fathers. They tended to overstate how good they were with kids and underestimate the stress of children. Although this is a widespread phenomenon, it is particularly acute for prisoners because they have little contact with those actually taking care of their children. They often lacked a model of family life:

‘They needed post-release help to parent and whilst they might not attend a parenting class outside, they might attend something like the YMCA’s Dads and Lads project, which is fun and somewhere you can take your son.’ (Katz, 2003)

WHAT HAPPENS IN PRISON

Being a dad

Many of the young men interviewed spoke about the importance of being a dad but some also expressed concerns about what the role actually entailed and their abilities.

‘I do love my kids but I am not really a good dad, but it doesn’t stop me loving them. I do send cards, but they are too young.’

‘I want to provide for my lads I think that’s what a dad should do. My dad was never around, but my mam was always there for us. I feel I’ve let them down but I do the jobs to get them things. They don’t do without.’

‘The main concern of nearly everybody in here is how to provide for your kids.’

‘I never really talk about being a dad it is not something you do in here – people just talk about their crimes.’

‘I think a dad should be there. My dad was always there for us and still is. I won’t lie to my daughter I will tell her why I came to prison. I want her to know me.’

‘I want to be a good dad, but I don’t know what to do or how to be a dad.’

‘My dad was always out and about but loved us. I don’t know what it is to be a parent and I am one.’
**Abdicating responsibility**

Our interviews with young fathers also demonstrated how being in custody inevitably results in abdication of the responsibilities involved with being a father.

> ‘This is the third time I have been in prison and I’m bored of it. It’s so boring; it’s not difficult it’s a bit like a school trip.’

> ‘You try to switch off from your responsibilities and being a dad, but when you are on your own you do think.’

> ‘I don’t mind missing out on the crying and the sleepless nights. I’ve got it easy in here.’

> ‘You have to switch off or you would flip. I would get upset if I really started to think about it all.’

> ‘When you are inside you seem to have your life and they have theirs outside; I’ve got my routine. My girlfriend doesn’t really tell me what it’s like - my sister keeps me informed. She doesn’t want me to worry and she makes out everything is ok - that’s not right is it? I’ve done wrong and she is suffering because of me and my baby has to do without me for two years.’

> ‘When you are inside I sort of switch off from the day to day things that happen at home, like paying bills, making meals …… I should think about how they are managing but you sort of switch off, it’s not that I don’t care.’

> ‘Jail is easy. It’s the boredom that gets you. I’m happy when I’m locked in my pad with my own thoughts.’

> ‘Here I’m told when to piss, when to eat but out there you have to think for yourself, you have to survive. It’s hard to get out of the routine and make your own decisions. We still expect to be told.’

**Arrival in Custody - Information giving and assessment**

For most prisoners arrival in custody made them anxious and stressed. Even if a young person has been in custody previously it may have been in a different prison, with different rules and regimes. Clear, consistent information about what is available to them whilst they are there is important.

In general, prisoners are not routinely asked (on arrival in custody) about their family circumstances and whether they have any children. There may also be reasons why some prisoners might be reluctant to answer this question. For example, young men may have worries in relation to the Child Support Agency. They therefore need to know why they are being asked the question and what will be done with the information they give. As well as being asked if they have any children, information about how much contact they had with them prior to custody and what contact/relationship they had with the child’s mother would be useful.

They could then be given information about who within the prison they can discuss such issues with e.g. family support worker, social worker, psychologist or chaplain. If they have no contact with their child but would like to find out how they might renew contact, then again a referral to someone who can look at these issues with them and advise them about their legal rights etc may be helpful. If there is a family liaison worker, then an initial appointment with that worker could be set up on arrival for each inmate identifying themselves as a parent. This would enable consistent information to be given about what is available within the establishment in relation to family visits and contact. Ideally, this worker should carry out an initial needs assessment.
An assessment would look at:

- What contact they had with any children prior to custody.
- Exploring the nature of their offence and how this may affect contact with a child (Schedule 1 offences, crimes with child protection implications and substance misuse may be factors in contact with the child being denied or restricted).
- Exploring the relationship with the partner of the child.
- Exploring other family links as these can be barriers or supports in relation to maintaining contact with children.
- Issues of legality i.e. parental rights/access etc.
- Assessing what courses would be most appropriate for them to attend whilst in custody.
- Explaining further issues of contact, telephone calls, letters, visits.

It is important to be realistic with young parents about their role as parents. Most young people in custody want things to be different on release. This is not easy and requires a lot of support. Clearly every effort should be made to help people change the behaviour which contributed to their being imprisoned. This work needs to start from the beginning of their sentence. Many young people will lose contact with their children whilst in custody and any work that can be done to prevent this is valuable. Understanding how their behaviour impacts on their children and families is a good starting point and a useful session to run with young parents. It is incorporated in some parenting programmes in custody but not all.

Information packs could be made available on reception or during induction about services/courses which are available within the prison and about visits, telephone calls, letters etc. Much of this information will be of relevance to all prisoners who want family to visit, whether they are parents or not. Additional information, however, about family visits/bonding visits, whether they are allowed photographs of their children etc is really helpful. Clear, consistent information given on arrival at reception or during induction can save a lot of anxiety. Otherwise prisoners are trying to find information out from others and picking things up in a piecemeal manner. Given literacy difficulties, however, the back up of an appointment, as suggested above, with someone within the prison at a later date to discuss and go through this information is important. Some of the young men interviewed said they were not asked at induction whether they had kids or not and wanted more information about bonding visits etc. They said that they had to rely on other prisoners to find out about these.

‘Nobody in here asks about our kids. It’s best not to say anything; they think you are soft in the head. I’ve got photos up in my pad, my girl sends them. She writes nearly every day. I do phone nearly every night.’

‘Reception asked when I came in if I had kids but never been mentioned since.’

For others, however, information is given at the induction stage.

‘I found out about the course on Induction. The teacher said it would be good for me.’

For some it depends on the length of their sentence as to what they are able to access. Given the short length of some sentences, it is important that information and access to courses is given as soon as possible.

‘If I had a longer sentence I might have done it, but I’m not going to be able to do it now.’

The majority of young men interviewed thought there was a lack of information about what was available to them. They wanted more information within the prison on noticeboards about visits and what’s available for them as parents as most said they found out about this from other prisoners. Similarly they felt there was a lack of knowledge about what information they could give partners and
families who contact the prison. Some also wanted information and advice on legal matters - in particular their rights as a parent and knowledge about parental responsibility.

‘If there was more information around in the visits room, or someone for our family to talk to …to explain what’s going on would be helpful.’

Few knew about the Assisted Prison Visits Scheme. One prisoner found out about it from his mum who had got the information from a book in the visitors’ centre. Some complained that there were no notices up about anything linked to visits. They felt information about visits should be posted to partners and families. Some prisons do provide all this information as a matter of course but not all. Sometimes information has to be given out several times so that it is taken in and understood. For example information given on immediate arrival in custody may not be taken in due to the shock and level of anxiety about their situation. As mentioned above literacy levels may also mean it is necessary for information to be repeated verbally at different points over the induction period.

Staff Feedback
Focus groups took place with staff from some establishments. Staff told us that probation officers send letters to the next of kin when prisoners arrive in custody asking for them to make contact but they often don’t receive a response. They will, however, occasionally receive a phone call, especially if the prisoner is in for the first time.

At one site all prisoners are interviewed within a week or two of reception. At this interview they are asked whether they are parents and asked for details of their relationship with their child/children. If they have children but are not in contact with them they are asked to discuss why this is and whether they want any assistance with making contact.

Some staff said that a prisoner who is a parent might not come to their attention unless a crisis occurs i.e. a breakdown in relationship, though most seem to identify themselves readily as parents on reception. With regards to information giving, staff at one establishment said there was a need for improved access to information and another suggested having more leaflets available for children in visits.

Good Practice Example Huntercombe YOI

Huntercombe YOI has two part time civilian staff who are Family Liaison Officers. When a young person is received into the prison they are routinely asked whether they have any children or if their partner is pregnant and if so whether she is likely to give birth whilst they are in custody. They are given information about how and who to contact to discuss issues regarding their family and children. During the induction sessions the family liaison staff have an input where they talk about the family visits scheme and the support services they offer.

Information about family visits and also assisted visits is given to partners and families of young people. They are also given the contact details of the family liaison staff. In addition to this Huntercombe runs a caseworker system where each inmate is assigned a caseworker to support them. Family members can also contact this member of staff if necessary. Caseworkers are invited to Children’s Visits and often attend if they are available.

Within the first 10 days of arrival there is a sentence planning meeting for each young person and outside workers and parents are invited to this meeting. Again any plans for maintaining contact with their children as well as courses available during their sentence would be discussed at this meeting.
Staff support

It is clear from the example of Huntercombe that having specific Family Liaison staff within the prison to support young prisoners in maintaining family ties and contact with children is beneficial. Prisons who have dedicated visits staff or Family Officers seem most able to provide the consistency of services that young people are asking for. Designated staff also mean prisoners know who they can go to if they want to discuss family issues or specific concerns about their children.

However, these posts do not exist in many prisons in England and Wales at present.

‘Staff don’t really ask about your life outside prison…why should they be interested in us?’

‘I don’t think staff in here can help you to be a better parent. Not the staff on the wings. They have a job to do. It’s upsetting to even think about families. You have to be strong and just get on with it. You’ve done wrong.’

‘Staff don’t give a shit really; they are just happy to lock you up. It makes life easier.’

‘Staff don’t really ask about your children, and we don’t tell them. Some are more bothered than others.’

‘We are all made to feel more guilty, even more than we do already. Staff look at us as though we are dirt.’

‘Some of the staff really do listen to you and take some interest, but what can they do? They can’t change things.’

Need to talk

Most of the young men interviewed talked about their need to be able to talk to someone within the prison about how they feel. This was rarely met. Many of the young fathers expressed anxieties about sharing their feelings.

‘There’s no-one to really talk to about what you’ve done and how you feel. Even though people say there is help inside you don’t really talk about your problems.’

‘When you are inside you don’t know what’s going on out there; it does your head in. Most of the lads in here don’t talk about their kids much during the day, but when you are on your own you think... I would argue with anyone who says they don’t think about their children.’

‘I do feel bad not being there for her... it’s thoughts you always have, they never go away. I don’t believe lads inside when they say they don’t think about their kids.’

‘I do have worries about my little girl - is she being looked after properly? There are things blokes inside have no say over which we should have - anything could be going on and we don’t know. Why should we be totally excluded from what’s going on in our kids’ lives?’

‘My parents have contact, but my ex-girl doesn’t want me to see her, but I’m her Dad. I miss her more than I ever miss anyone. It’s a hard feeling to describe, and we all have our reputation to keep. People would laugh at you or think you’re stupid if you showed your feelings in here.’

‘When I hear other voices in the background when I phone I get mad; I’m not sure who they are. I would kill any bloke who got involved with them – especially if they call someone dad.’
In prisons where there are dedicated staff young people were much clearer about the support available to them. The ethos of a prison and staff and attitudes the leadership of the Governor are important.

There is lack of consistency in treatment by staff and what different members of staff were prepared to do i.e. take messages, make a call, treating young people with some compassion and courtesy. For families a friendly smile and kind comment make a difference to how they feel about visiting.

In a recent report ‘Juveniles in Custody’ by Mark Challen and Thea Walton, the respondents were asked questions about how welcoming and helpful staff were. When they first arrived in the establishment 79 per cent thought the staff were friendly. This varied between establishments; from 94 per cent in one establishment where prisoners felt they were told what they needed to know by staff, compared with 49 per cent in another establishment. Just less than one quarter of all male respondents said they were treated well in reception. This rose to 59 per cent in one establishment and fell to seven per cent in another. Half of all male respondents said they felt settled in by the end of their first week in prison.

A similar disparity between establishments was found in prisoners’ views about staff in the focus groups.

**Staff Feedback**

One establishment said they did not have dedicated visits staff but as it was a small establishment people got to know the different staff on visits very quickly. They also said that they are selective about which staff work on visits because a level of commitment was required and it was seen as very important to have dedicated staff for good relations.

One establishment talked about how it had come a long way in terms of changing the attitudes of staff and how willing staff were to accept a shift in view. They have made sure that there are initiatives in place - not just reactive but more accepting and supportive of things like parenting groups. A staff shift can take years they said but can be moved on by a progressive management. They had seen a gradual cultural change in mindset and attitudes.

**Telephone Calls**

The number and length of telephone calls allowed in prisons varies with some seemingly able to phone their partners/children nearly every day. Others felt restricted by not being able to call often. A request for regular phone calls of a reasonable length was common. Some also said the expense of phone calls was a limiting factor.

‘Dads and Mams in prison should be allowed extra phone calls. It’s awful when you don’t have long to talk. You want to ask everything but you just can’t.’

‘You need your family, you should keep in touch.’

‘Phone calls and letters are the only way to keep in regular contact. Visits are okay but they can be upsetting for everyone.’

‘The only way to keep contact is to phone or write, but when your child is a baby it’s not much use. How will she know my voice? I phone 4-5 times a week but calls are recorded as well so you can’t always say how you feel when you don’t know who is listening. I write 3-4 letters a week’.

‘I phone every day and write nearly every other day. I wasn’t really involved before I came in so it’s all new to me.’

‘All I can do is write and phone. There are two phones on either end. That’s two phones for sixty odd
The speed at which messages are passed on to prisoners and sometimes whether they are passed on at all is variable. It clearly makes a difference to young men when they have received messages and is valued by them.

“When I found out she had the babies the staff told me. The first time some screw knocked on my pad door to tell me I was a Dad. I got to phone the next day to see if things were ok. The second time I got to phone straight away. Some staff are ok. They've got kids themselves, but others seem to forget we are people too.’

Regular contact with partners and children is seen as very important although not without its traumas.

‘My girlfriend tells him Dad's on the phone. I've missed his birthday, but will he remember? I'm not sure, so I wonder what the point is.’

‘You have to queue for everything inside. The worst is waiting to use the phone. You build up to it.’

Some prisoners said they would like someone to talk to after phone calls. Phone calls may be cut short, misunderstandings are easy on the phone. Many worry about what is going on at home in their absence. One young man talked about how he thought he could hear another bloke's voice in the background. If a young person has been pent up waiting to make a call, then the call goes badly, they may then be left with this overnight in their cell with no-one to talk to.

Another young man talked about how he kept calling home for a week and never got a reply. Clearly this made him very anxious and he said he asked if one of the prison officers could try and call for him at a different time but his request was refused. In the end he says that the chaplain called for him.

Another young father interviewed said

‘I do have worries about my little girl if I phone and someone else answers, not her Mam. I don't know who has her. Is she being looked after properly? There are things blokes inside have no say over. We should. Anything could be going on and we don’t know. Why should we be totally excluded from what's going on in our kids lives.’

**Staff feedback**

Telephone calls were not raised as a specific issue in the staff focus groups, though there were complaints about the manner in which reception staff took messages. Given the importance attached to telephone calls by prisoners and concerns about staff passing on messages it may well be that staff need to be convinced of the importance of clear communication and an understanding of the stress caused when telephone communication is difficult.

**Visits**

Many prisoners are in establishments a long way from home, which clearly has an impact on visits and many are moved frequently with no prior warning. The difficulties for families in maintaining contact cannot be under-estimated. Not only are some placed far away from home but often public transport to reach the prison is poor. Whilst travel is an issue for many visitors, it is particularly problematic for those with children. The prospect of travelling all day with young children to visit a prison is daunting for anyone and for many this means they visit infrequently or that getting to visits becomes so stressful that the quality of the visit is seriously affected.
‘I have been to seven different jails in two years.’

‘They just come in the morning and tell you are going. You don’t get no warning, you might have a visit booked and you can’t tell them, you don’t even get to use the phone. They could have come 200 miles to visit you and they don’t even know. They say it is security though.’

‘I got a letter the other day saying I went all the way to Norwich to visit you and you weren’t there’.

‘I wish I was nearer home, then I might have them visits. It’s not fair on them.’

‘I don’t know why we get moved so far from home – it can be too far to travel, even if you have a car. Lads in here come from all over the place.’

The introduction of booked visits has not been plain-sailing in some prisons. Prisoners’ family organisations receive numerous calls from families finding it hard to get through on the phone to book a visit. The Prison Service is currently piloting more effective booking systems.

‘I would always keep in touch and send Visiting Orders. How would they know I still loved them if I didn’t do that but I wish I was nearer home and could see them more often.’

‘I’ve learnt that if you don’t get visits, the prison will move you nearer home but if you get visits you won’t get moved so it’s obvious what I am going to do.’

‘There is only one woman in finance and she has to do everything all the postal orders, phone cards, pay the wages, yeah and do visits she can’t do it all that’s why everything takes so long. It takes two weeks for them to receive it. Then it can take another week.’

‘The best way to book a visit, is if I get a visit on a Monday, she will book a visit when she is leaving. Like not phoning, she will do it over the counter, it is the best way.’

‘Miss, I have had to resort to booking my own visits. If there is a visit on, sometimes you get cancellations, phone up get the cancellations. But they would have to ring all day every day to do that. Phone up from the wing and book your own visit. Your VO it has a number on it, you phone your people and ask them what the number is, then you ring on the wing and you phone and you book a visit yourself.’

‘A joke. Nightmare. They have to stay on the phone for an hour. On redial or whatever it is. So, this delay it puts a lot of people off - it really does. We are not talking about a few days, no we are talking weeks. Weeks. Yeah, it makes a lot of difference. You are lucky if you get three visits a month.’

**Impact on family**

Many of the young offenders also acknowledged the strain on their partners and families and expressed concerns for them.

‘I haven’t seen them for a while. I don’t want her travelling up here with two babies. It’s too far, and it costs. Nobody told me about claiming for travel; she might be able to get a lift up, I don’t know. It’s still a long way; it would take two hours. That’s a long time for the little ones.’

‘I’ve done wrong and I’m here to pay the price. That’s what the public want, but my girl and baby didn’t sell drugs. Why should they get all the shit thrown at them? I’ve been moved further from
my home town, so it makes it even worse for visits; it’s too far to travel with a baby. It takes them a whole day, there and back. What fun is that for a two hour visit?’

‘One of the worst things that happened to my girlfriend in the last prison was that she had booked for her and the little one….I had a court appearance the same week. The date was changed - I couldn’t let her know. She landed at the prison and I had been moved to the north-east. Now that’s just not fair on anyone. Why couldn’t the staff tell her? And I know I’m not the only one that’s happened to.’

The condition and layout of the visits areas was an issue to many young people interviewed. If it is not kept clean and there are no decent facilities for children, it makes visits very difficult. The floors need to be clean if young children are crawling around. There needs to be access to changing facilities, decent toys to play with, drawing, colouring, books, highchairs, baby bouncers. All these were mentioned by both young men and their partners. Many also commented on inconsistency of policy between establishments on whether they could bring bottles and baby food into visits. The layout of many visits rooms was also highlighted as not being conducive to interaction with family. There is often tension between the security of the prison and the needs of prisoners and their families.

‘Going to the toilet/nappy changes during visits is a problem - there’s lots of suspicion about passing drugs and you have to wait 10-15 minutes for more officers.’

‘I would rather have a strip search after a visit than them to be searched or sit behind glass.’

‘I don’t know if I want them to see me in here. My oldest was just a baby when he came to visit me. I don’t like the idea of the screws checking his nappy. I don’t want my kids going through it, that’s why I haven’t seen my baby yet.’

‘They search all the babies. That just ain’t nice.’

For some the visits aren’t long enough. The length of visits varies between prisons and between prisoners depending on which level of the Incentives and Earned Privilege Scheme they are on. To allow any sort of bonding with children, visits need to be long enough for the prisoner to speak with their partner and interact with their children. However, this is dependent on good facilities being available. If there is nothing for children to do and the prisoners are unable to get up at all during the visit to do things with their child, then long visits can be difficult and stressful for all concerned. Staff were seen as key in terms of what was allowed during visits.

Several young men said they wanted to be able to get up and walk around with their children during visits. Their partners too said they found it very stressful in visits if they were not allowed to get up, as often children did want to run around or babies be walked around if crying.

‘My kids would be too young to walk around, but I’ve seen others running about. The screws don’t like it, and you can’t get off your seat to pick them up or play with them.’

‘I think you should be able to move around on visits if you have kids. What kind of dad just sits there? There should be special days for dads. Women prisoners get more than men. It’s just shit on visits. It’s not worth having them. I don’t think I’ll have them any more. I’ve got five months so I will just wait.’

‘My son can’t even play with nothing, he wasn’t occupied, you know what I mean – so he starts running around the room, so in the end my baby mama takes him away.’

‘I get to see my daughter every month. I don’t like her coming in, I’ll never get used to it. She’s too
clean to be in here but it’s the only way to see her. I don’t like her going through all security checks. I don’t like not being able to get off my seat when she wants to get on the floor and play.’

‘Visits room is very big and noisy – you don’t always get a seat near to the play area. I think parents should get a seat nearby.’

‘Why can’t we sit and read to our kids? Instead we just have to sit there with a stupid bib on.’

Another issue that came up in interviews was the wearing of uniforms by both staff and prisoners. Prisoners wanted to be able to wear their own clothes for visits, especially for taking photos with kids.

Also some felt that staff in uniform were frightening for children.

‘Staff shouldn’t wear uniforms for visits - makes their kids see police outside and associate police with the one who jailed my Dad.’

For many it’s hard to know how to explain to children what is going on, where their parents are and why they can’t come home.

‘My parents visit me. We tell my little girl I’m on holiday. I don’t know what she really thinks or knows. I don’t understand what children understand at what age, but she does say to my Dad that Mam says Dad’s in jail and pointed to a prison when she went past one in the town. That’s not what I want her to know, but what say do I have in here?’

**Staff Feedback**

Staff talked about the difficult position they were in regarding visits and security. One institution reported that drugs had been found twice in children’s nappies. In another there was discussion about needing funding for a visitors’ centre and a play worker for visits. However, some voiced concern that if there was too much distraction for children on visits i.e. through play workers and activities children might not interact with the parent they had come to visit.

One establishment said that visits had doubled in recent months, but staffing had been reduced. The visits room was not big enough to deal with the number of visits it received and resources had become an issue. Many staff talked about needing more volunteer play workers. In some instances, children were running wild in one corner while inmates sat chatting with partners. There was also some concern that children were in the visits room at the same time as Schedule 1 offenders. This raised concerns about the issue of child protection and the lack of staff training in this area. Staff felt there should be a dedicated visits manager responsible for running visits. They also said that they would like to get more feedback from visitors.

**Examples of good practice**

**KIDS VIP**

KIDS VIP is a charity that offers training and support for prison staff to set up special visits. It provides guidelines for good practice and information on all aspects of improving and extending visits for prisoners with children. It’s information covers everything from aims and objectives of extended visits, security considerations for the Prison Service, child protection, risk assessments, staff training, equipment, and resources.
**HMP Ashwell**

The visits room at Ashwell has been made more child friendly by employing play workers and providing a designated area of the room as a children’s corner. Trained play leaders provide calming and engaging activities for children of all ages to take part in while their relatives are talking with the imprisoned fathers at the tables. The aim is to make prison visits as enjoyable and as unstressful as possible for the children, in order to encourage their relationships with their fathers. ‘Whilst we encourage children to be involved in the activities, we also realise the importance of contact with the person they are visiting’ says the Governor. We therefore support parents/carers in encouraging children to spend time back at the table - for example, by suggesting that they paint a picture for Dad, or by allowing them to take a book or toy to show him. The play workers are employed through the visitors’ centre and paid for by a grant from BBC Children in Need. (Cited in Inside Fatherhood, Fathers Direct, 2004.)

**Bedford and Wayland Prisons**

Bedford prison has an excellent children’s play area which caters for the needs of children of all ages from babies right through to teenagers. The play area has been open for eleven years and has been fully staffed by Spurgeons Child Care, Ormiston Trust and local volunteers. Currently the play area is open four afternoons per week. Having recruited more staff it will soon open on a Sunday afternoon. Extended children’s visits are offered every Wednesday – a two hour session in which children can spend quality time with their fathers in a relaxed and stimulating environment. These facilities have been improved by a recently opened visitors’ centre. Wayland Prison in Norfolk also has good facilities for prisoners’ families. They have a visitors’ centre which is open daily with visits that last all afternoon, four times a week. Wayland also has a children’s play area, which caters for the needs of children of all ages. There are plenty of toys, games and activities on offer to all children during visits. In addition Wayland offers extended children’s visits every month and family extended visits every Monday.

**Special Visits**

There was a lot of discussion in interviews about types of visits with young men wanting more flexible visits, special conjugal visits, bonding visits where they are allowed to move around with kids and actually do something with them such as use the swimming pool or football ground or a play area. Some prisons do run special bonding visits and family days. These are discussed in more depth in the examples of good practice later on in the report. In some prisons completion of a Parenting Course entitled prisoners to family bonding visits. Family Days were also suggested by some prisoners, though a few were concerned that as children got older they might find the environment scary e.g. razor wire/ fences. Some prisoners expressed annoyance that bonding visits could be withdrawn if they tested positive for drugs or were suspected of taking them.

‘Bonding visits occurred after main visit and the kids area was already dirty by that time. Time for these was also being cut back to 2.5 hours now. The second hour counts against your visits entitlement.’

**Magilligan**

Magilligan Prison in Northern Ireland runs special ‘child-centred’ visits for fathers and children (CCVs) so that the child is given the opportunity to be the centre of the father’s attention and be able to bond in ways that are not possible during normal visits. The hope is that this arrangement will assist with resettlement and release. Child-centred visits are a joint project between Northern Ireland Probation Service (NIPs) and NIACRO, and take place once a month for
up to eight fathers and their children. Children taking part in these visits are allowed to bring with them some items from home that they would like to show to their fathers. During these visits the mums are provided with lunch in the visitors’ centre and staff from NIACRO and Magilligan’s Visits Teams are available to offer advice. Forums provide an opportunity to raise issues.

**Staff feedback**

Staff said there was a lack of resources to do special bonding visits. However, the general view amongst staff seemed to be that they were beneficial, even though they were carried out with limited resources. One establishment described a two to three hour family induction a couple of weeks after reception. Another talked about an evening visit where tours of the prison were given to families, followed by a visit. The chaplain was then available during these tours to talk with people about concerns and to look at ways to maintain contact. Initiatives such as special visits and bonding visits often depend on the good will of the staff to volunteer their time. They are ad hoc rather than rostered and have an impact on staff working in security, finance etc, not just those working on visits. Staff may agree that different patterns of visiting are a good idea, but carrying them out and maintaining them as a regular part of a regime can be difficult. Many said that it would be helpful if management and Prison Service HQ focused on the quality of visits rather than the number.

**Good Practice Example – Huntercombe**

The children’s visit scheme at Huntercombe is running twice a month at present but is reviewed regularly to make sure that all prisoners wanting to make use of the scheme are able to do so. It was set up with funding from the Goldsmiths Charity for three years. In order to gain security clearance for all those visiting, once one visit has finished work begins on planning and booking for the next visits.

The room used for family visits is separate to the normal visits area and set up with a range of toys for children of varying ages, with books, television and video, colouring and paper as well as baby mats and baby seats. Lunch is provided for all those attending and baby changing facilities and facilities for feeding and heating bottles etc are provided. The visit can be for up to four people per young person so combinations of grandparents, siblings and partners can attend. There is a very friendly and informal atmosphere. The visit runs from 10.30am-2.30am and is flexible, which allows for people arriving late.

A health visitor is present during the visits and goes round and talks with young people and their families about any health-related concerns. Anyone involved in the trainees’ sentence plan is invited to attend and the two family liaison staff are available throughout.

Although clearly staff have to be aware of security issues their presence did not feel intrusive in any way. A sniffer dog is also a regular attendee in the visits room. The young people know that if anyone breaches security then the visits are likely to be stopped and the person breaching security may not be allowed family visits.

**HMYOI Reading**

The Family Liaison Officer at HMYOI Reading has put together an A4 booklet, with the help of colleagues, which provides vital information for families. This includes directions to the prison and basic information on what to do when entering the prison, what change is required for the visitors’ lockers, how to send in newspapers, their anti-bullying policy, suicide awareness and national drug policy to help promote safer prisons and safer communities. This has proved very successful and useful to families.
They have also begun to organise Dads and Children sessions where the partner, or in some cases the grandparents, bring the child(ren) into the prison. This would usually take place during the school holidays. The child(ren) would be left with the father for the duration of the visit this being 2.5–3.5 hours. During this time they provide structured play activities and lunch for the dads and children to share. At the end of the sessions, when the children go home, counselling is offered to the fathers. Support is available for all family members. Special events have also been organised. At Halloween the visits hall was decorated. The prisoners on the catering course made Halloween cakes. A colouring competition was held and the children were given balloons.

At Christmas a tent was erected with the help of a local army regiment and decorated as Father Christmas’s grotto. The local rugby team helped by sponsoring the event and a local Christian charity - Community Christian Action donated 50 wrapped presents. Each child was given a Christmas present selection box and each family was given a photo of the dad with his child (ren) and any other family members who wished to be included. Each Dad was also given a copy of the photo.

Another scheme was set up to develop and implement a web page that will be dedicated to families, where they will be able to e-mail questions regarding health, family problems and other matters that concern them.

“We believe by developing and improving family ties we are helping establish foundations that will provide support to prisoners and families during that initial period after release.”

**HMP Ashwell** runs special visiting days which are set up after prisoners have completed the Fathers Inside Programme. Prisoners are not expected to remain seated in the visitors’ room, where CCTV cameras monitor every table. Instead families join the father for picnics and games in the prison grounds. There may be a bouncy castle or a sack race. At Christmas the Head of Security dressed up as Father Christmas and handed out presents to the children. ‘It’s a big risk for security and our reputations. But it’s a risk worth taking’. (Cited in Inside Fatherhood, Fathers Direct, 2004.)

**Compassionate Leave/Home Leave**

Some prisoners thought that more compassionate leave/home leave should be available. Again, the criteria for granting temporary leave varied from prison to prison.

‘Don’t like the way it looks for kids when people see their dads never around - should be allowed compassionate leave/home leave e.g. for Christmas, I would go out even if I was handcuffed to an officer.’

Several young people said they would like to be allowed out for the birth of their child. Some prisons had allowed this. A video link was suggested as a possibility if the prisoner couldn’t be there.

‘Can go out for birth of child (10 hours unescorted leave), though depends on who you are and security status.’

**Staff Feedback**

Staff said that prisoners were not generally allowed out for births. Hospital visits were normally reserved for serious illnesses. Prison staff were not keen to be escorts at births.
Courses

Before looking at what young men said about courses, and the courses which are on offer, it is worth highlighting the views expressed by a number of young men who were clearly confused about exactly what sort of support might help them. For many some one-to-one work looking at their needs as young men and fathers might really help them to express how they feel about fatherhood. In that time they could also explore what support is available, both in prison and on release, to help them in their fatherhood role. Sadly, for many institutions the chance to have a member of staff spend significant time with a prisoner is rare. This, however, is a role that the YOT officer could take on, discussing these issues with the young person during their monthly visits.

Many prisoners talked about courses that they had been on or had access to. They expressed a wish for a whole range of subjects to be covered in these such as child development, dealing with relationships, impact of offending on children, better preparation for release and help with housing and jobs.

Some young men said that the parenting class covered childbirth, first aid, shopping with your child, but nothing about what to do when you are inside prison. Some took classes only because they were compulsory if prisoners wanted to have bonding visits, but said they didn't really know what classes entailed in advance. Some of the comments suggest that a broader course curriculum would be appreciated.

Some prisoners expressed a preference for courses to be run by outside agencies.
Some young men expressed the need for courses/support on relationships.

‘I think courses about getting on with people might help; and to know what to do or say to your girlfriend or wife.’

‘Maybe someone to talk about relationships might help – everyone seems to be divorced or messing around. Mates don’t really want to know, especially if you have kids. It cramps your style. I’ll have to change.’

Some wanted their partners to be involved:

‘It might help if we did the parenting course together. It would show my girlfriend and family that I want to change. My girlfriend thinks I’m stupid, so if we did things together it might help.’

‘I think having our partners in would help. They would know what we are talking about.’

Some prisons run schemes where the prisoners put together a video or tape a story to send to children which was viewed positively. More detail about such schemes is given in the examples of good practice.

‘I found out about doing a tape for my kids. I might do it, but it will be strange reading a story. I might do it if nobody listens while I do it. I might.’

‘I should probably do the relationship course and get my head around my family.’

Some young parents mentioned wanting to be able to do things for their children or make them things which could be sent to them such as buying a children’s birthday or Christmas card in the prison, or making presents to send to them. To be able to have a photo taken out of uniform to send them was also mentioned.

However, low levels of literacy can be an issue as highlighted by this young person:

‘The woman who runs the course is nice, but there is a lot of paperwork to fill in.’

The report found a significant difference in provision for young men under 18 and those in the 18-20 category whose overall needs are poorly met in comparison to the younger age group. Family work and courses for this older age group are rare. The differences between this age group and support provided for juveniles for example in Huntercombe and Deerbolt are marked. Young prisoners in adult jails seem to fare worst.

‘We do have Personal Officers but we don’t know their names and they don’t do anything. I think they have got a list but it is irrelevant to us. There is no induction.’

‘Family work - it ain’t going to happen.’

‘We have not even got the basics. It is supposed to be a working jail isn’t it? We are doing nothing, just locked up all the time. It is twenty four hour bang up Miss. There is no social sometimes. I have been applying for the last three months.’

‘Jobs, courses, we don’t bloody do anything. The jail is overcrowded miss and they ain’t got enough courses, jobs anything for anyone to do.’

‘No, we sit in cells all day. Banged up all the time. 24 hrs a day. I read a book a day miss, I do honestly.’
Support

For some, however, that support and belief in their being able to change can only come from people outside the family.

‘My family laughed when I told them I was doing a course. They think I’m going to be in and out of prison forever.’

If young fathers are to be engaged in support services both before and on release from custody, obstacles need to be addressed and taken into account.

‘I think there should be courses at the local health centres, where young parents can go. We had no idea what to do…we were both frightened when we bought the baby home from hospital.’

‘I don’t think I would do anything like this on the outside. I don’t think many lads would.’

‘We provide everything she needs – family are the only support. No other professionals involved, except when she had a midwife.’

‘You have to trust the mother of your child. Family is the best support. Nobody else can really help.’

‘We’ve sorted ourselves out. My parents have helped us to get another house near them, so that will help us. You don’t think of asking others.’

‘Social workers don’t help. They’ll probably just want to take the baby from us.’

‘I need help to build bridges with my ex-girlfriend and her family or I’ll never get to see my son. Then once I get out I will have to find work and get benefits sorted. My family and girlfriend have stuck by me. They are my main support through all of this. Who else can you turn to?’

Staff Feedback

Some staff felt that links between people running the programmes could be improved.

Outside organisations come in to run resettlement programmes and it was felt that parenting could complement the programmes, as part of pre-release work. Staff said it was difficult to get the services available to co-ordinate with each other. Better sharing of information was needed about courses which were available in other prisons. It was felt that some prisoners needed to go back to the very basics, such as caring for themselves and basic hygiene. Several felt that parenting and family relations should be covered as part of the pre-release course.

Staff in one establishment said they would like to extend the parenting group to the whole YOI but current staffing levels are not sufficient. Ideally, they wanted everyone to be told about the course on induction. They felt there was so much to cover - health awareness, sexual health, cognitive skills and relationships. Several said they could do with a module on parenting from a distance, but staff said time and money was needed to review and revamp courses.

Staff felt that some prisoners do not begin to make the connections until later on in their sentence when they are close to release and beginning to think about moving on. With this in mind, they felt it was imperative to consider what stage of their sentence would be most effective to participate in a course.
In the case of those who were drug users, staff noticed that they showed more of an interest in their children and relationships when they were off drugs – e.g. when they are in prison. This period of abstinence could be capitalised on in pre-release resettlement courses and plans.

**Examples of good practice:**

**Fathers Inside Course**
Piloted by HMP Wandsworth and HMP Ashwell and launched by the Prison Service in July 2004. The course is a partnership between Safe Ground and the Offenders Learning and Skills Unit. This is an intensive three week course that uses film, drama and storytelling discussion to engage even the most resistant learners, and encourages fathers to define their responsibilities and discuss how they can be fulfilled from prison with the resources available to them. The course allows prisoners to gain accreditation recognised by adult education colleges and employers – Parent craft (level 1), Group and Teamwork (level 2), and key skills: communication at level 1. It is the first course to be promoted and launched by the Prison Service with the backing of Paul Goggins, Minister for Prisons and Probation. It has also been independently evaluated by a team at De Montfort University. It is anticipated that 24 more prisons will integrate ‘Fathers Inside’ into their educational programme in 2004/2005. The course teaching manual and workbooks are available free and produced by OLSU.

**Family Man Parenting Course – Safe Ground**
Prisoners at Wandsworth made an award winning film whilst inside. ‘Blinda’, developed by Safe Ground, an education charity, is loosely based on ‘The Selfish Giant’, written by Oscar Wilde, who was separated from his two sons when he served time in Wandsworth. Blinda is about Frank, an incarcerated father who gradually realises the importance of communicating with his son on the outside. Part-funded by the DfES and the Offenders Learning and Skills Unit, the 18 minute film has been piloted at several prisons. ‘Blinda’ is a central feature of Safe Ground’s widely acclaimed Family Man Parenting course. The three-week course involves discussion of the film, improvisation, as well as considerable after hours cell work involving the exploration of roles within families, letter writing, and comprehension testing around the film. The aim is to boost literacy and create a sense of group identity and shared learning to improve family relationships. Drama-based activities are key to the success of the Safe Ground education projects. Drama makes courses interesting to participants and increases accessibility. Prisoners with low literacy levels participate equally in the course. Drama also increases self-confidence as prisoners try out their new skills over the duration of the course, culminating in the final presentation in which they stand up in front of up to two hundred people, including the prison governor, prison officers, and other prison staff. Prisoners reported many positive outcomes as a result of undertaking the courses, from improvements in the frequency and quality of family contact to more positive attitudes to education. Family members concurred with the outcomes cited by the prisoners and point out that many of the positive effects were still in evidence three to four months after the courses ended. (Cited in Inside Fatherhood, Fathers Direct, 2004).

**HM YOI POLMONT**
Two prison officers identified a need for positive parenting programmes during the course of their work. Twenty per cent of the population at Polmont were fathers in regular contact with their children. Their induction now includes a question about fatherhood, and this information is kept on a database. The officers brought the fathers in Polmont together and asked them what their needs were. Bonding visits play a key role. The prison is now able to offer visits with relaxed security so that dads can play with their children. The parenting course is now an approved programme which, Headquarters have agreed, can be used throughout the whole estate, creating a continuity of support that has numerous advantages, such as an offender who is
moved can simply start the course where they left off in another prison; and children are no longer confused by different visiting practices in different institutions. Moreover, dads doing the bonding visits get an extra two visits every six weeks. The parenting programme lasts for six full days, one day a week, and staff aim constantly to review and improve it. Sessions include many topics, such as why we need families, communication and assertiveness skills, health and safety, drink and drug issues, first aid for children, child birth and child development work, facilitated by health workers, and sex education. One of the most successful parts of the programme is the video story initiative, in which dads are filmed reading stories from books. Videos usually take two hours each to complete and dads are able to rehearse what they will do. The video is then sent home to prisoners families. Fathers feel they are taking an active part in their child’s life and children begin to recognise the father, which also makes visits less stressful.

**HM YOI Deerbolk**

In 1996 Marilyn Carter and Carolyn Naseby started a family relationship course at Deerbolk. They soon realised that the dysfunctional lives of many young men had led to misguided views on the role of women, safe sex and maintaining relationships. The effects on society were clear: unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and a demeaning approach to women. They developed a course which emphasises the importance of family life and encourages offenders to take responsibility for their own children. This now forms part of the core Social and Life Skills curriculum at the prison. The course won a Butler Trust award in 2003.

**Geese Theatre Company**

The Geese Theatre Company based in Birmingham is dedicated to working with offenders either in prison or on probation. The Company uses drama as a powerful rehabilitative and motivational tool. ‘Gutted’ is a play used in their three-day course, which includes an exploration of parenting. Throughout the three days the participants are asked to make connections between Craig’s (the principle character) choices and their own, and to explore what change could mean to them. They use drama and a range of exercises to create a safe and supportive environment within which these challenging issues can be discussed. The final day looks at difficult parenting situations. The participants create fictional scenarios to illustrate particular problems. Group members then suggest and enact solutions to those problems. (Cited in Inside Fatherhood, Fathers Direct, 2004.)

**Head of Midwifery at Milton Keynes Hospital**

Woodhill prison, a Category A local prison, has pioneered a ground-breaking project funded by local Teenage Pregnancy groups. The course aims to get men to think about women and their perspective on pregnancy. It challenges the assumption that wives and girlfriends can cope. It addresses emotional issues and draws on men’s experiences rather than using traditional classroom style delivery. As well as offering ante-natal information, the project focuses on the realities of a 24 hour day with a baby. The course also helps men to be considerate about their partners and to understand how pregnancy affects both them physically and emotionally.

**Magilligan Prison in Derry, Northern Ireland** approached Men’s Action Network (MAN) to run a men’s health programme looking at both their emotional and physical wellbeing. The work of MAN at Magilligan aims to offer men a safe separate space within the prison system in which they can talk about anything. Included in the programme are the themes of fathering, anger management and relationships between men and women. The men at Magilligan talk about their aspirations for family life and the impact of imprisonment on their families. Many of the prisoners had had bad childhood experiences of life with their own parents. The twenty session programme of two full day sessions per week, over a ten week period, consists of groups of twelve men, selected by the prison. The men themselves create the agenda for discussion. According to
Michael Lynch, the facilitator, sometimes the structure of the prison regime means men lose the capacity to think for themselves.

Magilligan are also running child centred visits once a month so children can have a special visit with their dad. While the child visits dad, mums are provided with lunch in the NIACRO visitors’ centre. This gives them a chance to meet with other mums, and staff from NIACRO. The visits team are on hand to offer advice and support to them. They also run family induction sessions where the family are invited to view the prison accommodation, workshops, gym, education and induction unit.

**HMP Greenock**

The fathers programme in Greenock runs for five weeks, twice weekly, for two hour sessions. How to explain to your children what has happened to their dad is discussed. ‘The men need encouragement and guidance on speaking to their children, not simply the mother’. They look at letter writing - so dad comes down to the children’s level, perhaps by drawing cartoons. ‘We use the gym for games with their children so they know how to play with them at no expense.’ At the end of it all there’s a quality two hour visit to which the whole family can come. The children do face painting and read books. There’s also a buffet so they can sit as a family and eat together. It’s a great incentive to join the course and shows what life could be like if they do not re-offend.’

(Cited in Inside Fatherhood, Fathers Direct, 2004.)

**Hindley YOI/Connexions**

Young Men and Fatherhood is a pilot programme carried out by UK Youth as part of a wider Connexions project on behalf of the DfES, to engage young men who are already fathers, or considered at risk of becoming fathers, to enable them to become more aware and take responsibility for family planning and parenting. Six programmes were set up with partnership projects and local agencies such as YMCA Partnerships in Prison in Cornwall, and Hindley YOI. The aim is to make fathers aware that parenting is not just about mothers looking after children. Icebreakers, one to ones with a worker, and role-plays are the methods used to interact with young men. Issues covered include sex education, benefits, custody and rights of access, parenting skills and the participant’s relationship with their own fathers. This is a pilot scheme but it is hoped that the pilot will provide the basis for a nationwide programme.

**HM YOI Stoke Heath**

An eight-week course ‘Being Dad’ is being run at Stoke Heath, which covers all aspects of parenting. Following completion of the eight week course, inmates are entitled to join the Dad’s club which has regular speakers from outside agencies such as Sure Start, Home Start and Fathers Direct, and provides an opportunity for fathers to speak informally to each other.

**Family Matters – New Bridge**

New Bridge takes a holistic approach to prisoners and their relationships. It started as a befriending organisation for prisoners, visiting on a one-to-one basis. The resettlement advisors now offer individual advice in three or four prisons and are running resettlement programmes, focusing on reintegration into the family. They produce a monthly newspaper Inside Time, which is used as a useful forum to let prisoners know of any good ideas/initiatives.

Family Matters operates in a number of institutions across the YOI estate. The course is accredited by the National Open College Network so that participants can gain a recognised Open College Unit if they complete it. The aim of the course is to provide participants with an awareness and understanding of the nature of family life and the roles and responsibilities of parenthood. The course is delivered via questionnaires, videos, practical work and discussion groups. The format is as varied as possible. It takes into account the poor concentration levels
and low standards of literacy of a lot of young offenders. Following the success of this course New Bridge, have developed ‘Your Family Matters’ for the adult male and female estate, which addresses issues presented by older children. They have also included topics such as domestic violence and sexual health.

**Story Book Dads**

HMP Dartmoor has been running a Story Book Dad scheme for eighteen months and the project has been extended to other prisons. ‘All they need is a minidisk recorder and a microphone and some books.’ Prisoners are recorded telling a story with the use of a microphone and a minidisk recorder. The story is downloaded onto a computer and any mistakes edited out. Music and sound effects are added and the final story put onto a tape or CD. The result is very professional and the children and dads are amazed by the results. ‘The feedback from the families and dads is overwhelming’ says project leader, Sharon Berry, ‘the children love these stories because they can hear their dad’s voice whenever they want. The dads feel that they are doing something for their children and this goes a long way towards strengthening family ties’.

Any prisoner can take part regardless of their reading ability. The editing process eliminates any mistakes, and also any unwanted noises that often occur in a prison environment (gates, keys etc). They can take part on its simplest level (just reading a story) or embark on one of the other more ambitious aspects of the scheme such as making a book to send out with the audio story.

Funds were raised to purchase the equipment needed for a small editing suite in the prison and prisoners have been trained to help with the editing. A story can take 3-4 hours to edit. The prisoners then send their recordings on minidisk to Dartmoor and they do the editing. Portland YOI have joined the scheme. Women’s prisons Bullwood Hall and Cookham Wood are also planning to become involved – the birth of Story Book Mums. The scheme can be run through the education, library, Writers in Residence, volunteers, officers, or prisoners themselves.

**The Big Book Share** – A scheme created by Launch Pad which is a library development agency with a mission to highlight the importance of libraries’ work with children, and build new partnerships between them and other sectors.

A pilot scheme in Nottingham prison in partnership and with financial backing from Marks and Spencer is helping maintain dads’ relationship with their children, by sharing books with them at visits. These books are taken from special collections set up in prisons. They also record stories on tape for their children to take away and listen to. Older children can take part in the Summer Reading Challenge on prison visits. They also offer support for parents in prison with poor literacy skills.

**The Ormiston Trust**

The Eastern Region Families Partnership is a seven-year programme for the development of prison and community-based services for prisoners and their families across the eastern region. The partners are the Ormiston Children and Families Trust, the Lankelly Foundation and HM Prison Service. It includes all prisons in the region, as well as prisoners and their families. Their objectives are to:
- Consult extensively with children and families, including researching what people actually want in terms of visitors’ centres, explain how difficult travel might be for visitors, and describe the everyday experiences of families with a partner in prison
- Enable children to maintain relationships and regular contact with an imprisoned parent/carer. There are difficulties with maintaining regular contact; particularly since
people under the age 18 must be accompanied by an adult

- Recognise and value prisoners in their parenting role
- Ensure that other service providers and community-based groups become aware of and responsive to the experience and issues faced by children and families with a member in prison
- Influence policy makers and Government, and inform the general public.

They intend to achieve these objectives through the following:

- Ensuring that there is a welcoming visitors’ centre
- Establishing children’s visits
- Creating child-friendly visits areas. One crucial issue to address here is letting the children know about the level of noise to expect before they arrive
- Establishing parenting programmes for prisoners
- Establishing family link workers. Most prisons have personal officer schemes, but they have found that a non-staff member on the wings can act as an intermediary when prisoners have worries about visits
- Greater involvement in induction and sentence management.

CHAPTER 4 SUMMARY - YOUNG FATHERS IN CUSTODY

- A father’s parental status is rarely considered by courts.
- Many fathers have been marginalized by family and health services prior to custody and have had unsatisfactory relationships with statutory services, which they were unlikely to trust. However, fathers have increasingly been put on the family services agenda.
- Most fathers in custody have had the opportunity to attend parenting training. In order to be effective this training needs to be co-ordinated with pre or post release support.
- Young prisoners on arrival in custody were not asked whether they were parents. Our research showed that there is reluctance among young men to discuss family issues with either staff or other prisoners but many did admit that they needed support.
- Young fathers often had difficulties receiving visits due to distance from home and their movement from institution to institution. This was particularly common for men aged 18-20. Young men interviewed also felt very protective towards their children who were increasingly subject to security checks. In some cases this has led to young men asking their partners not to visit.
- There are some excellent examples of good practice. However, it is clear that in many institutions family learning courses need to be added to the resettlement agenda. Fathers resettlement needs are poorly addressed and many young men interviewed saw little opportunity for future employment and viewed continued offending as a way of providing for their children.
Chapter Five

Young Mothers in Custody

KEY FACTS: MOTHERS

- Home Office research has found that 66% of women prisoners are mothers (Hamlyn, B & Lews, D), and each year it is estimated that more than 17,700 children are separated from their mother by imprisonment (Hansard House of Commons written answer 16th May 2003).

- HM Prisons Inspectorate has found that 25 per cent of women prisoners’ children are looked after by the children’s father or partner; 25 per cent were cared for by their grandmothers; 29 per cent were cared for by other family members or friends and 12 per cent were in care, with foster parents or had been adopted (HM Prisons Inspectorate, 1997).

- Just five per cent of women prisoners’ children remain in their own home once their mother has been sentenced (Justice for Women, PRT 2000a.)

- In a survey carried out by the ‘parenting under pressure project’, 49% of the children of mothers in prison had no say in decisions about their care, unlike children in other care arrangements (Katz, 2003).

- At the end of 2003, half of all women in prison were held more than 50 miles from their home town and a quarter were held more than 100 miles away. With so many being held a long way from home, visits from families are more difficult (Letter to Annette Brook MP from Home Office Minister Paul Goggins, 18th December 2003).

- There are currently 102 places in mother and baby units reserved for prisoners who have children under the age of 18 months.

- Another 450 places to house women prisoners, including a mother and baby unit for ten prisoners, became available in June 2004 when a new private prison, HMP Bronzefield, opened in Ashford, Middlesex. A further 360 places will be provided at a new prison in Peterborough due to open in 2005. There are currently 17 female prisons (PRT 2004d, July Fact File).

SPECIFIC ISSUES FOR YOUNG MOTHERS

Most young women are primary carers of small children and often single mothers prior to entering the prison system. Therefore the major preoccupation for women is who is going to look after their children. Men, on the other hand, generally serve a sentence in the knowledge that their partners will care for their children. A Home Office study (Caddle, 1997) concluded that ‘imprisoned mothers, are in a sense, doubly penalized – they are serving a sentence and at the same time they are trying to make provision for their children.’
The fundamental difference in the experience of imprisonment between men and women may need to be looked at in more depth by sentencers and the Prison Service. For example, where imprisonment cannot be avoided, regimes in women’s prisons should be structured in such a way as to provide adequate opportunities for mothers to fulfil their responsibilities towards their children while serving their sentence.

The Inquiry chaired by Professor Dorothy Wedderburn ‘Justice for Women’ (PRT, 2000a) concluded that:

‘First, efficiency and genuine equity in sentencing can only be achieved if sentencers concern themselves with the impact of the sentence which they impose on all concerned including dependents. This requires that the distinctive position of women offenders and, in particular, of the large numbers of women with primary responsibility for small children, should be taken into account as one factor relevant to the determination of sentence.’

The Halliday report ‘Making Punishments Work’ (Home Office, 2001a) recommends (recommendation 10) that parental status should be considered by the courts when making sentencing decisions:

‘The proposed new sentencing guidelines should look for consistency of approach, rather than uniform outcomes, and recognisable justifiable disparity, for example in cases where the offender has young dependent children.’

However, in practice, these recommendations appear to have had little impact.

Caddle (1997) in her research on imprisoned mothers found that most children are placed with family members but are often moved as carers face increased financial problems, difficulties coping with the children and increased health problems. The difficulties encountered often mean that children are continuously passed from one carer to another during a mother’s sentence.

Woolf (1999) found that there is evidence of long-term harm to children of imprisoned mothers stating that ‘many children go on to become delinquents’. Major changes children face may include; moving house, financial hardship, increased stress, loss of contact with family members, being taken into care, and change of school. Many children are not told of their mother’s imprisonment and those who are rarely talk about it for fear of repercussions. Many children feel a range of emotions and they may fear they will lose the other parent or they will be bullied if people find out.

Extraordinarily, the Government does not collect figures on the number of women in prison who are mothers, but it is estimated that around two-thirds of the 12,650 received into prison each year are mothers, who on average have 2.1 children (Hansard, House of Commons written answer 28th April 2003). The YPP project and a number of voluntary organisations have been campaigning for this data collection to take place. The Child Poverty Review (HM Treasury, 2004) does state that data on imprisoned parents will be collected under NOMS.

Because of the severity of impact on children resulting from the imprisonment of mothers, a number of organisations and individuals are pressing for alternatives to custody to be used for this group.

**Support for alternatives to imprisoning mothers**

‘Separating a child from its mother is the most severe punishment the courts can levy. Most women who commit crimes have drug or alcohol problems and suffer from mental illness. In the majority of cases alternative custodial sentences could have been used which would allow them the opportunity to address the problems that led to their crime and enable them to continue to care for their children.’

(Lucy Gampell, Director, Action for Prisoners’ Families as cited in Action for Prisoners’ Families, 2003)
It is hard to think of a worse place than jail for a young mother or a pregnant woman, not because staff do not try to respond to prisoners’ needs, but because prisons are punishments of last resort not care or treatment centres for exceptionally vulnerable women with, or without, their babies. Why do we persist in locking up young mothers, who have mostly not committed serious or violent offences, holding them miles from home and damaging another generation of small dependent children when, given the comparatively small numbers involved, it would be possible to establish local support and supervision centres for women who offend?”

(Juliet Lyon, Director of the Prison Reform Trust cited in PRT, 2004g)

“We hope that sentencers will heed the recent guidelines issued by Lord Justice Woolf urging restraint in the use of imprisonment for mothers. The fact that the lives and life chances of so many children are affected when their mother is imprisoned is both frightening and saddening. It is time that the best interests and needs of children are placed more predominately on the criminal justice agenda.’

(Anita Dockley, Howard League for Penal Reform cited in Howard League for Penal Reform, 2002c.)

‘All too often the effect of institutionalisation is to remove any personal responsibility that is the very worst form of preparation for life in the community, particularly for women who are primary carers for children.’

(Sir David Ramsbotham, Former Chief Inspector of Prisons)

‘Because I am being punished it doesn’t take away from the fact that I am a parent that I am still a parent, I still have a responsibility towards my child. It’s not about punishing my child I know that but she is being punished anyway – while I was there, being estranged from me, not being able to see me when she wants and needs me.’

(Young mother)

‘Are we not all humans prone to mistakes?
Do we not all learn from making mistakes?
I’m still a parent – my child still needs me.
All because I made a bad decision, I don’t count, she doesn’t count.
Punish me punish her.
I’m not even consulted regarding her welfare.
Allowing her to walk home on her own, even though I wouldn’t let her do that. Not yet.
Ask her do you wanna see your mum, do you miss your mum, do you need your mum? Ask her
(Young mother featured in the DVD – ‘Young Mothers from Custody to Community’ included with this report.)

Young women in prison may be concerned about being pregnant in custody, worrying about how long they will be able to keep their child with them, if at all, and feel guilty about their situation. Women are also more likely to split up with their partner whilst in prison and are at greater risk than male counterparts of experiencing mental health problems, particularly depression. There is evidence that these problems increase in prison. Many women entering custody were already experiencing mental health problems. The Social Exclusion Report, 2002 highlighted that many women prisoners have experienced a range of disadvantages prior to custody.
Of all the women who are sent to prison, 37% say they have attempted suicide at some time in their lives (Singleton et al, 1998).

Women in prison suffer from numerous mental health problems. Two-thirds of women show symptoms of at least one neurotic disorder such as depression, anxiety and phobias. More than half are suffering from a personality disorder. Half of the women in prison are on prescribed medication such as anti-psychotic medicine and anti-depressants. There is evidence that the use of medication increases whilst in custody (Singleton et al, 1998).

The number and rates of self-harm are much higher for women than men. In 2003, 30 per cent of women were reported to have harmed themselves compared to six per cent of men (Prison Service, June 2004, Safer Custody News).

Many women in prison have serious drug problems – around 40% could be diagnosed as harmful or dependent drug users (Singleton et al, 1998).

Over half the women in prison say they have suffered domestic violence and one in three has experienced sexual abuse (Singleton et al, 1998).

Fourteen women prisoners have taken their own lives up to November 2004. Anne Owers, Chief Inspector Of Prisons, in her report on Eastwood Park – found that ‘girls seriously cutting themselves or being found unconscious with a ligature was almost a daily experience.’ The acute mental health needs of many women in custody, show that women do not cope well in a system set up primarily for men.

‘A prison healthcare team told me about the dreadful state of many young women when they first reach prison and their acute physical and mental health needs. They spoke, too, of the shocking numbers of women harming themselves in prison and the battle to try and prevent suicides and of their fears for them returning to a life of drugs and crime when they are released.’ (Booth, 2004.)

The women’s prison population is very high. Women offenders are increasingly being given custodial sentences and there is clear evidence that this is because of an increase in severity of sentences for this group.

‘This increase is not because women are committing more offences, nor is it because the nature of their offending is becoming more serious – in fact, shoplifting and fraud remain the most common offences committed by women. Rather, the increase is because imprisonment is becoming increasingly relied upon as the appropriate means of dealing with women offenders.’ (Booth, 2004)

On 2nd July 2004 there were 4,475 women in prison. In the last decade the population has almost trebled (Home Office, 2003. Prison Statistics England and Wales 2002, London: Stationery Office)

Of sentenced female prisoners, the majority are held for non-violent offences. In 2003, the largest proportion - 42% - were held for drug offences (Home Office, 2003. Prison Statistics England and Wales 2002, London: Stationery Office)

More women were sent to prison in 2003 for shoplifting than any other crime. Just over 2,700 women were received into custody for this offence. (Home Office, 2002,
Statistics on Women and the Criminal Justice System, London: Home Office.) They accounted for nearly a third of all women sentenced to custody in 2002.

- Most of the rise in the female prison population can be explained by a significant increase in the severity of sentences. In the Crown Court in 1991, only 8% of women convicted of motoring offences went to prison. By 2001 that proportion had increased to 42%. Similarly, a woman convicted of theft at Crown Court is now twice as likely to go to prison as in 1991 (Carter, 2004, Managing Offenders, Reducing Crime, London: Strategy Unit).

- On 31st March 2004 there were 1,007 women on remand, 18% of the female population. But they account for two thirds of the women who enter prison in a year. Of those, 58% do not receive a custodial sentence, and one in five is acquitted altogether (Home Office, 2003. Prison Statistics England and Wales 2002, London: Stationery Office).

One of the consequences of the increased use of custody for female offenders has been that many women, especially first time offenders, are not expecting a prison sentence or to be held on remand, as the majority of offences committed by women are non-violent. Consequently families are not prepared. They are literally left ‘holding the baby’. A father or grandparent left to take care of the children may have to give up their job. As most visits take place during work and school hours it is extremely difficult for fathers to visit their partners and hold down a job. Many are reluctant to tell employers about their situation because of the stigma attached to the imprisonment of a family member, and in particular a woman and a mother.

Another contextual difference between young women in prison and young men is the lack of specific establishments in the prison system for young women. Despite a Government pledge in 2000 that all girls would be moved from adult custody. By the end of 2003, 91 juvenile girls remained in Prison Service custody (Cited in Howard League for Penal Reform, 2004e).

Finally, the post-release experience for women is particularly poor; many women prisoners lose their homes and often possessions whilst in custody.

**Arrival in Custody and Information Giving**

In the young women’s focus groups concerns raised were similar to those which arose in the young men’s focus groups. Not all were asked at induction if they had children. Young women felt there was a lack of clear information about what was available to them. The majority got the information they needed from other prisoners. They felt rules were inconsistently applied and wanted clear guidelines about what they could and could not expect. They were concerned about the lack of information available to families.

As mentioned in the section on young fathers in this report we felt that information packs followed up by an interview and assessment with a Family Liaison Worker in the prison would help to ensure that concerns can be addressed, information gone through and assistance given to young mothers. One subject which came up time and again was how to explain to children what is going on. This is a very difficult and sensitive issue and it depends on the age of the child as to what is said and how it is explained. They also expressed a need for more legal information on their parental rights (as did the young men).
**Staff Feedback**

Staff said they would welcome more information regarding families and family work.

**Placing children from custody**

One of the first difficulties mothers in custody face is the placement of children. Often there are no inquiries made by Social Services regarding the suitability of the carer. Whilst in prison some mothers are under considerable pressure to demonstrate fitness as mothers in order to regain custody of their child on release. Failure to demonstrate this may have serious implications for their future with the children, especially if the case is under review. Children's services need to be aware of the obstacles faced by mothers in demonstrating fitness in an institutional setting and liaising with those services with regard to the welfare of their children.

> ‘Once a woman is placed in custody she has to try to make provision for her children. At Holloway Prison I observed the First Night in Custody scheme run by PACT and was struck by how many women who came into the prison had not in fact made arrangements for their children and were then frantically trying to sort things out.’

*(Booth, 2004.)*

**Comments from young mothers interviewed:**

> ‘At the time of being arrested – as you can imagine that was just traumatic because my concern wasn’t for myself, it was for my daughter and my family. I was in shock. Regretting what I done, wanting to be with my child and just thinking about how things were going to develop, how things were going to pan out. But then much later on when I heard that my daughter was exposed to the fact that I was in prison and how she was exposed to it, I was upset, I was angry. Because I think a little more tact could have been used, because she’s a child.’

> ‘I think the first six months were really up and down for her, especially because it was four months before I was sentenced and she was really to-ing and fro-ing. She was like from her dad’s to my sister’s and from my sister’s to her nana’s.’

> ‘It was really hard for me as a mother coping with her care. I was glad that she was cared for by people she knew rather than going into care, and with strangers. But it was still really hard because people were doing things the way I wouldn’t as a parent.’

> ‘She could either go into care or with a family. My sister offered. She went to live with her for about three weeks. It didn’t work out. My sister had a few problems because her boyfriend had just died. Then my dad came forward and offered to take her, which worked out better. (Respondent mentions she had not seen her father for a while) Yeah for about 15 years. I’d seen him in passing and said hello, but that was it really.’

> ‘All they did was a home check that was it – to check there was room for her, they never really got involved. Suitable bed and that was about it, I think they should have got more involved. I really think she should have had her own social worker to give her counselling and talk to her, cause she wasn’t talking to anybody really. All that kept coming out of her mouth was I wanna come back and live with you mum.’

> ‘We were moving from hostel to hostel as she didn’t have a house. We kept moving every day, we’d have breakfast there and dinner somewhere else. I went to two different schools while I was living with her.’

*(Child of imprisoned mother.)*
Pregnancy and birth in custody

In September 2003, 12 per cent of the young women in prison were pregnant (Hansard 16th February 2004). Pregnancy raises complex issues for girls in prison. Depending on the length of sentence, there can be anxieties as to whether they will be separated from their baby after it’s born. The Howard League for Penal Reform carried out research in Bullwood Hall and found that many girls in prison had practical concerns, such as how to prepare for the arrival of the baby, dietary needs and antenatal care. Others worried about their safety and that of the unborn child (Howard League for Penal Reform, 2004b).

Our own research revealed a lack of special provision for pregnant girls and women in custody. Their healthcare needs were particularly neglected. The response to a Parliamentary Question on this issue was that pregnant women in custody are entitled to the same healthcare provision as women in the community. However, from the comments made by mothers, many of whom had been pregnant in different institutions, healthcare provision is patchy and inconsistent.

Comments from young mothers on the experience of being pregnant or having a baby with them in custody:

‘I was transported two weeks before the due date about 100 miles.’

‘The health visitor was temporary every two weeks but not like someone regular.’

‘The nurses take notes in a red book but generally don’t pass it on.’

‘Rooms are like a shoebox with no space to crawl.’

‘Being in prison was hard enough but with a child it’s worse, sometimes staff say things like it was your choice to have a child in prison.’

‘You can’t demand extra food, cushions; I remember hard beds with a mattress that reached the floor there was no support to ask for a new mattress.’

‘Access to showers was restricted. When you are pregnant there’s no extra access. I just felt dirty all the time.’

‘Being pregnant was hard. You have restricted clothing, it was hot in the summer, you were stuck in the room all day, and with the windows as they are you can’t feel a breeze.’

‘Prison was hard while being pregnant. I found it very difficult; I mean you don’t get treated any differently. At the time my family wasn’t speaking to me. I was on my own in prison not knowing what to do or what I wanted. Being pregnant all I wanted was my mum, and I kept writing and writing just to get a letter back.’

‘If I wasn’t pregnant I would have coped a lot better, but it was the fact that I was pregnant. It was difficult. The food in there is all right – it’s not bad. You get a fair amount of food. It’s a bit boring getting the same thing for lunch but that’s prison – what do you expect? You can’t expect a three-course meal can you? So you get extra milk with meals if you are pregnant.

‘The doctor sees you and stuff like that but you have to put in an application form to see the doctor. You can’t just say to one of the screws – I need to see a doctor. The only time you can do that is if it’s urgent, if you’re nearly dying or something. The application form has to go over to
healthcare, which is in a different part of the prison. Then you have to wait for a slip back to say you have got an appointment. And then you go through an appointment – it could take weeks before you see someone. And by the time you see them you are okay.’

‘Every time I got a court date it kept getting cancelled. So I’d get my hopes up, so I’d get everything ready. Sitting there all excited thinking I’m getting out, or maybe I’m gonna know how long I’m gonna get. Cause then I can make decisions about mother and baby units inside, or if I’m going to keep the baby inside with me, you know answer a lot of questions I needed to answer. But then they’d come to me in the morning – it’s been cancelled, you’re not in court today. Things like that just make you feel – oh forget it, I’ll just give up.’

‘I had really bad morning sickness. And being in a single cell you have the sanitation where you have to actually press a button and wait in a queue to get out your cell. So if you need to be sick, you need to do it there and then, you can’t wait in a queue So in the end all I had was a bowl put in my room for me.’

‘When you are pregnant in prison you still have to fit in with the rules. It was very hot when I was carrying the baby and all I wanted was a cold shower, but I had to fit in with association times. We don’t get treated differently, but we do get to see the doctors and a nurse.’

‘I was very worried that everything was all right. I didn’t know what to expect…if the baby should be kicking more? I couldn’t really settle to anything, but the girls talk to each other. That’s where you get help. Not from the staff. The staff have their job to do. Some say that we should have known better, or why did we get pregnant in the first place.’

‘I had my daughter in the local hospital. I wasn’t handcuffed, but staff were with me all the time. It was awful being watched all the time. The hospital staff look at you as though you are something from space or you are going to kill someone. I didn’t enjoy that bit at all, but we got better food in hospital than we do in the prison,’

‘Social Services cropped up a few times. I’d been in foster care myself anyway. I’d sit there at night thinking I’ve done drugs, I’ve done crime. They might think I am a bad mother automatically because of these things. Am I going to get my baby taken away from me? Am I going through all this for nothing? There were lots of questions I’d sit there asking myself, that I couldn’t answer because I didn’t know.’

**Mother and Baby Units**

- There are a limited number of places on mother and baby units. Prison Service policy is to advise people on reception if they have a baby, or are expecting one, that there are limited places. Nearly two-thirds eligible for a place said they had not been told about Mother and Baby units at reception. Most had not been given the information leaflet.

- Whilst on a Unit it is Prison Service policy that mothers are responsible for the day-to-day care of their babies. Most felt they were able to look after their babies in their own way. However, the children are in restricted environments which some child development professionals argue affect the development of children. Some professionals argue that for those women serving long sentences, over18 months, the babies should be cared for outside the prison before they get too attached to their mother and are traumatised when separated at around 18 months.
Staff
In one establishment in Scotland young women prisoners felt positive about the role of Family Contact Development Officers who had been in contact with many of their families. However, they expressed frustration about the difficulty in contacting social workers, who many rely on for access to their children. They talked about having to submit a request form to see social workers but it taking a long time to get a response. There was also concern expressed about speaking with statutory agencies for fear of permanently losing their children.

'I don't think we can tell probation or social services how we really feel, in case they take my daughter from me. Then if I don't say anything they still think you're not doing things properly. You can't win. I do worry I will lose my baby in case I'm not doing things right, or people think I am a crap mother.'

Some felt that prison staff were not supportive enough.

'If the CARATS team aren't around and you are feeling down, you need someone to talk to. And half the time they're too busy, they're coming up with 'I've got paperwork to do', this paper work, what's five minutes? Just to listen. Even if they're not interested, just look as though listening, make someone feel better.'

'Staff should be showing prisoners more support - only get support once they self harm.'

'They should be more understanding. No emotional help that's why a lot of folk kill themselves.'

'Staff should do more to encourage good relationships with child, support, advice, information.'

One of the establishments had a Samaritan Listeners programme, which on the whole they felt, was good, 'but Listeners can't tell staff, can't do anything about it, some people do not trust other prisoners'.

In the film on young women in prison, which accompanies this pack, women said that they really need someone to talk to in prison. Some of these young women have had little help and support prior to custody or have not been able to make use of it because of their situation. Once in custody, however, they have time to think about their need for support and the need for someone to listen.

'Salvation Army offers help with transport, phone calls etc.'

'Particular problems here getting people to make calls, get things done, still no response from social worker despite repeated slips, most support comes from visits staff.'

Many complained that prison rules and regulations were inconsistent. The majority had no faith in the complaints system.

Contact with family
Anne Owers, Chief Inspector of Prisons in a report on HMP Cookham Wood in Kent in 2003, highlighted the impact of overcrowding and staffing difficulties on family contact. She has made recommendations to the Prison Service on how to prevent further deterioration of visits and provide child friendly facilities. Staff shortages mean that prisoners have restricted access to telephones and children’s visits have been curtailed. We found that women had experienced many difficulties with access to phones.

Phone Calls
Phone calls are critical to maintain contact with the outside world, family and friends. Some of those interviewed said that phone cards were too expensive and that they wanted to be allowed more free
calls. Mothers also referred to the lack of privacy with phone calls to children. Phone cards have since been replaced by the pin phone system throughout the prison estate, though the cost of calls remains the same.

‘If problem or emergency, family can ring the block but messages can be delayed.’

‘Difficult getting staff to make phone calls for you i.e. to social worker. Put in request slips but then hear nothing.’

‘I had correspondence with her while I was away and tried to encourage her to write. I needed to do that for myself – just to let her know I loved her, I sent her certificates, cards, and letters upon letters. I had to – to let her know that even though I was away, I was in prison, I’m still here and I’m still concerned about you and I need to know that you are being a good girl and I love you.’

**Staff Feedback**

On one site staff agreed that telephone contact could be improved by providing a dedicated contact line for genuinely needy cases, though there was concern about the logistics.

**Visits**

Some young women felt that visits were not long enough when people have travelled a long way. Others were critical of the design of the visits room such as wanting them to be bigger with smaller tables. Young mothers, like the young fathers interviewed, also found it difficult not being able to get up from their seats, saying that it was hard to explain the reasons to children.

Practical problems were mentioned such as that there was no tea bar and the vending machine was often empty.

For some, visits were infrequent and they relied on friends, family or social workers to bring their children to visit. Of those interviewed, their children, if they still had access to them, lived with the mothers’ parents or were in the care of Social Services.

‘Visits don’t happen very often. My family don’t live in this area, it’s too far to travel and it costs so much. My mother has enough to think about and I’ll be going back there to live when I’m out.’

‘Problems with social worker staff who bring the kids, they are not always available to do this.’

‘The officers are around – it’s just impersonal. Then as you can imagine the time just goes really quickly and before you know it it’s time to say goodbye. It’s not relaxed when you think about it. You’re seeing your family and I am a prisoner and I am being punished but it seems to extend further than an individual being punished. It seems to extend to punishing family members and friends.’

At Cornton Vale special child-friendly visits called ‘Cherubs’ were provided. Young mothers felt very positive about these visits but said you had to be serving nine months and over to be eligible. These special visits were stopped if the mother tested positive to drugs. They then had to have three negative drug tests over three months to get another ‘Cherubs’ visit. Sometimes even then visits could be refused on the grounds of security, though they were not always sure why.

‘Can’t be a good Mum from inside – just do your best, that’s why things like ‘Cherubs’ visits are so important - particularly frustrating when unsubstantiated information stops visits.’
Some young mothers suggested being able to take their children to the gym, have all morning to visit or be able to take them in a more natural environment, making food for them, letting the children have playgroup learning visits so children and mums can interact in a more natural way.

One mother was involved in a custody battle, which meant she had no visits/contact with her child. She had a solicitor in Aberdeen working on her case but Legal Aid didn’t cover the solicitor’s travel expenses, so she had to change, and start from scratch with a new solicitor.

At the end of 2003 half of all women in prison in England and Wales were held more than 50 miles from their home town and a quarter were held more than 100 miles away. With so many being held a long way from their homes (Letter to Annette Brooke MP from Home Office Minister Paul Goggins, 18th December 2003.) visits from families are more difficult. One Home Office study found that only half the women who had lived with their children or been in contact prior to imprisonment had received a visit since going to prison (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002).

Staff Feedback
Staff at one site said that a dedicated visits group, ideally with hand picked staff, was essential if visits and links with families were to improve. Some staff felt that a change of uniform for visits staff should be considered and the role of the FCDO, which is rare in English and Welsh prisons, needs streamlining and redefining.

Courses
In contrast to fathers in prison, the development of parenting courses for mothers has been very limited. There are two reasons for this; the first is that historically the numbers of women in custody have been small. The second is that there was a general perception that it would be patronising to teach parenting skills to mothers. With the surge in the women's population in the last 10 years, this situation needs to be addressed. Some respondents said they would be interested in a programme on child development but they felt this would have more credibility if it was delivered by an outside agency.

Others identified a need for courses which covered a whole range of areas which the young women felt would help them get back on their feet and manage in the outside world.

‘I need more help with money and housing – to get my daughter back I have to prove I can do this but I don’t know how.’

‘We have to do work or education. We leave our babies in the crèche, but other Mums run it. I think we should be able to stay with our own baby. We have to get on with it. We don’t have the choice, but it won’t help me on the out. I need a place of my own and enough money to get by.’

‘I don’t know if parenting courses help or not. I need to know about injections and things.’

‘Drug courses focus on heroin but not everyone takes it. There is no opportunity to give feedback on content /appropriateness of course - looks good for parole but means little else – they give methadone to anyone.’

Staff Feedback
Staff spoke in one prison about enhancing the role of the health visitor in the prison e.g. to conduct antenatal classes, child development programmes, sexual health programmes and health education. They also suggested using trained volunteers provided by the National Childbirth Trust. Parenting classes were about to start in this establishment, but they felt informal parenting groups could also be of use. Video storytelling was seen as a good initiative, but staff felt it needed dedicated staff.
EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

Parents in Prison
The Parents in Prison project operates in Eastwood Park, Highpoint North and South, Wandsworth and Holloway, as well as in Leeds where they fund a project led by the librarian. The focus is on supporting parents in prison and letting children know that their parents love them. Once passed by security and probation (for child protection) the prisoner is referred to PIP to make a taped story for their child. Each session lasts two hours and generally only two parents are present at each session. PIP has volunteers who sit quietly and support the parent. They help the parent choose an appropriate book or encourage them to make up a story, sing a song or just send a message. Each parent also makes a card with stickers, glitter crayons and bright paper. The tapes are posted all over the world and many are made in a foreign language. It is a gift for the child. PIP feel that the time the parents spend with the volunteers is as important as the tapes they make for their children. Sessions can be very distressing for some parents. The volunteers give the parent the courage to send their children a message that will heal a small part of the damage done by separation.

The Anna Freud Centre and New Bridge
Holloway’s Mother and Baby Unit is currently piloting a project run by the Anna Freud Centre, a charity providing psychotherapeutic interventions for children and families, and voluntary organisation New Bridge, which works with offenders. Following evaluation it is intended to extend it to all units in England. The project aims to improve mothers’ parenting skills by helping them to understand their babies’ emotional and developmental needs. It also helps them prepare for separation. The aims of the course are to:
- increase the mother’s knowledge base about infant development
- enhance the mother’s confidence in her ability to parent her baby
- enhance the mother’s capacity to think about her infant’s needs and communications
- increase the baby’s and mother’s responsiveness to each other
- increase pleasurable interactions between mother and baby
- support the mother in preparing her to say goodbye to her baby, where that is the case.
Each course runs once a week for four weeks, with a morning and afternoon session every day. Mothers who have given informed consent will be interviewed and videoed with their babies before and after each course for the evaluation.

New Bridge - Family Matters for Women
The New Bridge Family Matters Course has been developed to assist women in their parenting role whilst in prison, and to give a clearer understanding of how relationships work. The aims of the course are to:
- create an atmosphere of confidentiality and trust between course participants and trainers, by working as part of a group and assuming ownership and responsibilities
- deliver a course which becomes a catalyst for change in the participant’s attitude towards family life and parenthood
- enable participants to make informed choices, to take control of some aspects of family life.
Below is a personal account of the impact of custody from a young mother currently at East Sutton Park taken from a speech delivered at PRT’s Young Mothers conference in May 2004 (Shaw, 2004.)

My rendition of the Impact of Custody – by Fiona Shaw

I am serving a prison sentence and currently residing at East Sutton Park open prison for women. I have never had any dealings with the police, courts or the wrong side of the law. This is my first crime ever and I was sentenced to nine years imprisonment.

I am a proud mother of two, who I left at the tender ages of 2 and 3 years old. When I am released in July 2005, if granted parole, they will be 7 and 8 years old; with a mind, character and initiative of their own…

The custodial sentence has been the worst part of our lives. My children are innocent in all of this, but unfortunately most affected.

I am not trying to disregard my crime or the fact that I am to be punished, but four and a half years out of my life is just a hindrance for me to achieve what I believe I am worthy of, but maternal deprivation for my children will have a detrimental, lasting affect on them.

Being so young, naïve and innocent, I thought it only fair that they are not burdened with the truth of where their mothers is currently residing, as I envision my little prince at school with friends saying “my mum is in prison” and not understanding the implications behind such a statement, so for them they have been led to believe that mummy, is at ‘work’…but being a women of substance, that is all they have known both their parents to do, so I can only imagine my poor babies; in the still of the night, getting dropped and picked up from school, at the dining table, conversing in the playground with friends, or when it is just them alone with their thoughts, questioning “Why doesn’t mummy come home from work like she used to? What is it I’ve done wrong? Doesn’t she love me anymore? Why?”

Admittedly these are unspoken thoughts and my opinion, but once you have established a mother and child bond, you are aware your children were happy and content and have never been apart from you for any length of time, the first couple of days from when you are imprisoned, you know your child’s mind is in question ….but the worst thing about it all, is no matter what you say, you are not in the physical position to ease their pain…..

At East Sutton Park as a mother, who previous to imprisonment was primary carer to my children, I am eligible for primary care leave, meaning, I have the opportunity to go home for three nights and four days, to spend quality time with my children and maintain that all important mother and child bond. Primary care leave is granted every nine weeks, and while this kind of leave is a godsend, at the same time it is extremely exasperatingly, frustrating for all those involved.

Just as the children get used to mummy being there to tuck them in bed of a night, read them a bedtime story, be there when they wake or just doing simple motherly things that another would take for granted, they witness mummy running around the house to make sure she has all that she arrived with in her travel bag, nothing more and nothing less. The atmosphere takes an instant change, everyone becomes silent, facial expressions are no longer a Kodak moment and eye contact is no longer permitted.

The aching pain observed in their eyes and whole demeanour is heart wrenching, but I am forced to put a brave face on it all, to give comfort, support and to show strength. It is not for me to weigh my children down further, by allowing them to witness my pain, tears and the anger I feel when leaving them….again. So I try so hard to lighten the mood, make obtainable promises and demand smiles and laughter before that door closes behind me. But really my chest is feeling so tight, I swallow profusely to hold back my tears and pain, and sincerely hope and pray, we all survive this challenging time.
The strain is not only on the children but also on their parents; their father and I being in our tenth year of a testing relationship. My children’s father unfortunately is not coping too well with my imprisonment and the temporary single father role.

With me being in my third year plus, out of my four and a half years to serve, my family and I are suffering different levels of stress and depression. I have recently been informed that my little girl is seeing a therapist at school, her father is suffering with depression. I am mentally and emotionally strained from being everyone’s strength (as well as my own) with no substantial support.

My mind is seriously telling me to try and survive the rest of this sentence with as much of my sanity intact, get my children and attempt to start my life afresh with just the three of us. My heart is in conflict, as I am aware my inner contentment is non-existent due to my children’s father not handling our situation, that his lack of support is not intentional. There is still sincere love between us both and I understand that a prison sentence affects all involved in different and detrimental ways, which in turn makes survival methods differ.

I know it is so easy to follow my head, but it takes a stronger person to follow their heart in this situation.

I have recently started relationship counselling, well one session, due to the lack of funding to progress further! But from the one session so far, it has proven evident that this could be just as important to maintain a strong family bond upon my release, which my children so deserve after this traumatic situation that they have been innocently involved in.

Counselling is something neither of us have ever received, and with the stigma attached to seeing a psychiatrist, this is a huge step that we are both willing to work with and as mentioned previously from the one session attended, it is apparent that this will be most beneficial for re-establishing a stable, comfortable and happy environment for the future of our children, as neither of us are the same people we were before my imprisonment.

With prison having a way of breaking down communication, in turn leads each individual to come to their own conclusions, with no clarification from the other, be it good or bad. This is where the problems arise, followed by a breakdown of a relationship that once had such a strong foundation; I refuse to let prison be the cause of my family to deteriorate.

Fortunately for me I have had the opportunity to grow as a person: with the ambition and determination to not let the system break me down, with intense observation of my surroundings and society as a whole to maintain those all important standards and morals to enhance my employability for a successful re-integration back into society for my immediate family and myself. Whereas, their father has been forced to resign, live on social security benefits, obtain temporary accommodation, forced to take on a temporary single parent role and to put his dreams and ambitions on hold with no external support … this is bound to knock a man down.

What seems to be overlooked or maybe just plain ignored; a mother is the foundation of a home, as long as that home started with mum, once she is absent for any length of time, that home is going to be in destruction sooner or later. For me, a maternal attachment was made, a family was once happy, and yes, it is my crime that led me to be taken away, but what is a 9 year sentence doing to help my children and family that I could not have learn from a 1 or 2 year sentence?

Again I am not disputing the fact that punishment should be given to those committing a crime, but it is the length of time that is being placed upon women with children. Yes, as a mother I am suffering, but it is the children who suffer more and who are the next generation.

As a psychology and sociology student I am aware of the effects and statistics of children with parents that have been imprisoned at some time in their life. I have made my mistake and will
ever be in debt to my children and family. What is the justice system’s excuse for future
generations?

Added 22 May 2004: Further to the above, my only baby girl is slowly dying. She has a brain
tumour that is so huge that the surgeons have stated that they refuse to do any further surgery
as the per cent is higher that more harm will be done than good. She has only experienced 5
years of life, 3+ of which I have lost. My fault ... granted, but I still have just over a year to serve
... I seriously doubt the state of my sanity, why? I have nothing more to learn within these walls,
I have addressed my offending behaviour over and over, I have proven to be ‘somebody,’ all that
I am now forced to do is freeze. My whole being is so cold, I can only freeze.

The poem below was also read out by a young mother at East Sutton Park at the young mother’s
conference (Newbold, 2004.) Karen had her son whilst in custody and then had to hand him over to her
mother while she continues through her 11 year sentence, which is due to end in January 2007, if granted
parole. This is her rendition of the impact of custody through a poem she wrote called ‘This Time.’

This Time
Complete isolation, of the mind and the heart
Feelings are disillusioned, with no stop or start
Lost souls hope, racing minds sing
I have my life, but I’ve got nothing.
What a blast, an unbelievable goodbye
What's left to do, should I cry or sigh?
It's all gone, hope, joy & laughter.
Shut down all visuals for now and after.
It's all around me, that hate and spite
Wanting to break me with all it's might.
Sorrow, tears, they're magnified
Why can't I smile, God knows I've tried?
Why now, why here, why me?
Why are they making me, replace reality?
I won’t smile – I don’t want to
What I want is to make it through. To really make it through.
I stand here, now knowing that I can
And when I finally meet this plan
I will smile
I will hold my son, and lead him away from danger.
CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY - YOUNG MOTHERS IN CUSTODY

- Imprisoned mothers face different challenges to imprisoned fathers, including the placement of children, as they are more likely to be both primary carers and single parents prior to custody. Other contextual differences include the small number of women's prisons and the long distances women are held from home and the placement of women in institutions set up and designed for men. Women in prison are more likely to have mental health needs than men.

- Children of imprisoned mothers are usually moved around between carers with little consultation with the mother regarding their care. They rarely stay in their own homes or school during a mother’s sentence. This has a significant impact on imprisoned mothers’ children. The Halliday report (Home Office, 2001g) recommended introducing sentencing guidelines for primary carers.

- Imprisoned women may also have to deal with pregnancy; pregnant women in custody are entitled to the same healthcare provision as pregnant women in the community. Our research shows that this is often not the case and some pregnant women faced inadequate diet, limited access to antenatal provision and inadequate health provision.

- Imprisoned mothers identified similar difficulties to fathers in term of keeping in touch, such as travel distance for visits, but were less likely than men to have someone able to bring their children to visit them. They also, like men, faced difficulties getting on to the phones. A dedicated phone line was suggested so staff or prisoners use the phone to contact statutory services re the placement and provision of care for their children.

- Parenting and family support initiatives in custody for women are very limited. Where courses did exist, our research identified the need for input on topics such as child development and relationships.

- Resettlement needs of women such as housing, benefits, employment, health and mental health are poorly met. All of these factors if not addressed will have a negative impact on a mother’s ability to regain custody of a child. The Women's Offending Reduction Programme (WORP) (Home Office, 2004e) aims to tackle the complete range of factors that influence women’s offending and highlights the impact of imprisonment on children.
MINORITY ETHNIC PARENTS IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM:

KEY FACTS

- At the end of February 2003, one in four of the prison population, 17,762 prisoners, was from a minority ethnic group. This compares to one in eleven of the general population (Hollis et al, 2003).
- Overall black prisoners account for the largest number of minority ethnic prisoners (15 per cent) and their number are rising. Between 1999 and 2002 the total prison population grew by just over 12 per cent but the number of black prisoners increased by 51 per cent (Hollis et al, 2003).
- In 2001 there were more African Caribbean entrants to prison (over 11,500) than there were to UK universities (around 8000) (HM Prison Service & Commission for Racial Equality, 2003).

A report published in 2004 by the YJB, (Youth Justice Board, 2004a) again highlighted the over-representation of black and minority ethnic (BME) young offenders in the YJS. The report looked at the progress of 17,000 cases to determine whether differences in outcomes for these young people compared with white people were related to gender or ethnicity alone, or whether they could be attributed to other factors such as criminal record, the nature and the seriousness of the charge, or age. They found that some variation could be explained by the nature of the offence but others did point towards discriminatory treatment. According to the report the YJB has already made steps to improve practice in relation to black and minority ethnic groups including:

- Publishing guidance for Yots on achieving equality.
- Funding a number of mentoring projects for offenders from black and ethnic minority groups
- Ensuring some money from the Board’s intensive supervision and surveillance programmes is channelled to target BME youngsters in high custody areas
- Widening recruitment procedures to attract a more diverse workforce into the youth justice system.

The YJB would like to see specific programmes targeted and designed for this group working in prisons. (Cited in YJB, 2004a).

A recent report by SmartJustice (SmartJustice, 2004) noted that the CJS Race Unit has been set up by the Home Office to look into reasons for the over-representation of black and minority ethnic people in prison. A programme of action is being developed to eliminate discrimination within the CJS agencies.
The Social Exclusion Unit has identified several factors that are more common among BME prisoners than the rest of the population. These include being excluded from school, poor mental health, homelessness and unemployment. (Social Exclusion Unit 2002).

‘All too often black inmates are exposed to many additional pressures, which the system often exacerbates.’ (Glynn, 2002).

Because of this over-representation of BME groups in custody, one of the aims of the YPP project was to identify specific parenting/family support for minority ethnic groups in custodial and community settings. We know that BME groups are even less likely to use community services than other young disadvantaged parents prior to custody, and less likely to attend parenting support in custody. Moreover, most parenting training in custody is delivered by white middle class women. The sexual health workforce has a similar make up. Hence, there are few role models for this group.

In searching for examples of good practice for this group in parenting and family relationships courses it became apparent that there were very few courses for ethnic groups. Diversity is rarely discussed in much of the parenting work that goes on even though cultural values greatly affect what we feel about parenting. With rising numbers of BME prisoners, it is clear there is a major need to be proactive in looking at new and innovative ways to provide this section of the prison population with stimulating and challenging programmes.

**BME young parents – In the community**

Information on the specific needs of BME young parents was sparse. A study by Yyler (Yyler, M, 2002) attempted to identify ways in which sexual health and health services can be made more accessible to young men. All young men interviewed were from African-Caribbean or Asian communities. The findings in this study were:

- Most young men were not aware of any support services even though they existed within a 2-3 mile radius
- Young men interviewed wanted and expected politeness from health service practitioners but often spoke of impoliteness, particularly from reception staff. They had a mistrust of doctors. Most did not talk to friends about health issues and had no professional support, leaving them very vulnerable
- They preferred a health service within a community building, centre or youth club, which was accessible to all the community, and used for a number of reasons. They did not like having to make appointments and wanted drop-in services.

**Good practice example:**

**Glynn, M., B.L.A.K., Featherstone Prison residency evaluation.**

Martin Glynn is the Director of an organisation called B.L.A.K (UK) (Being Liberated and Knowledgeable) an organisation that delivers arts-based Rites of Passage/Personal Transformation programmes, within healthcare, prisons and the community. He was commissioned by a YOI to identify issues for young black fathers.

The project lasted two weeks. Key areas discussed included: fatherhood, parenting, black on black violence and how to solve problems. The work used short story writing, poetry, magazine publishing, and black literature/history/politics. In consultation with the men it was agreed the process should:

‘Recognise the spiritual and emotional turmoil experienced by vulnerable individuals within our society, where there are divisions between the spiritual/physical and emotional/rational. In doing so we aimed to create a climate of self healing, nurturing, and repair, to enfranchise men, helping them on their own unique and personal Rites of Passage.’

Findings (As cited in Glynn, 2002b)
What are the barriers to black fatherhood?
Love and hatred of self
Bringing up a mixed race son in a white community
Employment
Finding employment, as a black man is not easy, so there is a lack of provision for our children
As a black man you are seen from a bad perspective
Being accepted for who you are, and gaining access to achieve your full potential
Racism, employment
Money and employment.

Do you discuss the problems you face with anyone?
Yes - family
Yes - occasionally with my mother
No - there's no one to discuss things with, on a black conscious level
No - because I have no-one who understands me
No! There is no one to discuss my problems with in prison
NO! There is no one to discuss things with, on a black conscious level
No! I don't discuss. it is considered a weakness to express oneself.

In what ways do you rely on others to help with your children?
Good friends
I don't
I expect friends to respect my children and for my family to treat them as family
Baby sitting, someone close, not strangers
My mother will look after my son
Friends who will ensure they won't come to any harm
I don't rely on anybody for anything
I rely on my relatives for black enlightenment.

What do you do to avoid the negative influences in your children's lives?
Tell them what I have been through. Threaten them with the loss of things and ground them
Pinpoint the rights and wrongs in life
Scream at them. Keeping negative influences out of the home
I make sure they have full knowledge of drugs and gangs, warning them about the consequences
Teach them about the pitfalls I have faced.

How do you play a role in your children's education?
As much as I can
I tell them what education is about and how you can get somewhere in life with the right qualifications
Not really
I mainly help with black history
I let my children know good education can lead to a successful life
I point out to my children all of those role models who have achieved status through education
I tell my children they will be able to access the good things in life with the right education.

What can a father who is not in the home do to take care of his children?
Put your own life on the back burner when it comes to your children. Keep the contact and love flowing
See the children, read to the children, and give them support
Write and keep constant communication
By keeping contact with the mother regardless of the circumstances
Stay at home a lot more. Provide money for the welfare of the youth
Get on with the children's mother and be committed.

What is the survival strategy for you and your children?
Stick together and help each other
Be aware of your surroundings
Money, money and more money
Work hard and save money. Have a good job. Be there when children need me.

How important is Black history/culture/literature in your child's understanding?
Very important
They must know where they are coming from and where they are going without it they will die from ignorance
Without it there is no balance in a biased world, without it we cannot develop ourselves fully
We have lived in the darkness for too long
We need to know what contribution we have made to this world
Expose the fraud and replace it with balance and truth.

Who is the ideal role model for your children?
A man supporting his family
Any black star or people who have made it without a life of crime
Malcolm X and Martin Luther King
Black sportsmen, politicians and musicians
Mother and father
Me
Any man or woman who through their actions has contributed towards the development and enhancement of human life.

In recognition of the need for further work in this area, the ‘Young Parents in Prison’ Project commissioned Martin Glynn to undertake research into the needs of young fathers in HMYOI Deerbolt and to produce a report (Glynn, M, 2002b). The brief was to identify issues with fathers & non-fathers, through a research process using poetry and personal stories. Staff and prison officers contributed through discussion. The Life and Fatherhood Skills programme was reviewed with the aim of identifying and including key parenting skills. The research looked at problem solving skills, creative thinking, team working, attitude, behaviour and social skills, responsibility, self-esteem, self-awareness, communications skills, inter-personal skills reviewing, controlling aggression and exploring and managing feelings.

Glynn recommends programmes where individuals come to know themselves and their purpose (‘Rites of Passage’) to make the transition from boyhood to manhood. Glynn believes this inability to make the transition is a critical factor in good or bad life choices young men make.

‘Through the acquisition of a new value system, based on the principles of responsibility for one's self, family and community, a foundation for such change can take place.’ Therefore, most of his work centres on Rites of Passage and is value-centred, exploring the emotional journey men take.
Key findings from interviews with young fathers at HM YOI Deerbolt

• Young men have not been socialised to articulate the full range of emotions. There is often a need to develop ‘emotional vocabulary’. The custodial environment – in which development of vocabulary is not encouraged - generates a kind of internal oppression, and leads to negative perceptions of self. ‘Absence of being’ is made worse by an environment that is largely set up towards punishment rather than attempting to rehabilitate through a holistic approach. Existing rehabilitation programmes are not working and do not address core factors that confront young fathers in prison. There is a need for personal transformation work.

• The relationship with the mother of their child/children is often non-existent or problematic, which means access is difficult. They need to provide financially but have no legal rights.

• They were often excluded in decision-making processes by health professionals, because of the difficulties staff felt identifying with young fathers.

• Primary care is still seen as a mother’s domain. Fear and loathing of CSA was identified.

• Prisoners’ mothers were often involved in childcare but a prisoner’s father was usually absent.

• Young fathers were often adolescent boys trying to do the best they could without emotional or material tools to match societal expectations.

• Young fathers in prison have difficulties with separation and bonding.

• Young men in prison validate manhood through gang membership, oppressive sexual attitudes and irresponsible behaviour.

• Young men were highly sceptical and unable to trust.

• Young men in prison have seldom been able to demonstrate their ‘fatherhood’ with dignity.

• Barriers were reported in terms of access to benefits, housing and services and many turned to alternative means to provide for their children.

• For some young fathers – break-up from the child’s mother was expressed as anger rather than pain.

• The feelings about being locked away were expressed as rage, inadequacy and a sense of failure as a father.

(Cited in Glynn, 2002c)

Glynn concluded that ‘Men need a process of recovery – personal growth and an extension of emotional vocabulary. Through reclaiming a new identity and consciousness they can reclaim and learn how to live again, whilst challenging stereotypical assumptions’.

More black-led programmes need to be developed within education, which allow discussion, debate, and critical analysis and that will increase prisoners’ inter-personal skills, including arts-based programmes in the field of parenting. Glynn also recommended that there needs to be more recognition of the creative potential of black inmates.
What I am Going to Tell My Son – ‘Ghetto Rain’ [Martin Glynn]
(Cited at the PRT conference on young fathers, Glynn, 2003a)

My mother gave birth to an innocent child, another brother from the ghetto born gentle and wild,
Had a nomad for a father so lived on our own, for most of my life I had to go it alone,
And as I grew into a youth full of anger and rage, I became a ghetto soldier just ten years of age,
I stopped listening to my mum to run with my crew, I became a waste of space because my dad ain’t come through,
My mother still tried hard to keep me on the right track, but I ignored her advice and kept pushing her back,
So despite her support and the nurturing way, I preferred the ghetto runnings and the urban decay,
No prospects of a job, thought that I was cool, I was now a big man, glad that I had left school,
I did not care for no-one, I was stupid and wild, I became a father too young with a very young child,
So as I look back and reflect how far that I have come in my journey in life and how it begun,
Through the ups and the downs, through the highs and the lows, the lessons I have learned and how that I have grown,
There is one journey left I cannot fake, cannot run, it is the passing of the knowledge from a father to a son,
I have to leave him with the tools to create a life plan and to show him how to make a transition from a boy to a man,
But what can I say that will help him along, to help him understand the difference between right and wrong,
I’d say son: ‘you have a proud heritage from a powerful race, you have to know who you are and what is your place’,
‘It is about having values and having good health, understanding your history and knowledge of self’,
‘It is about independence and not turning mad, knowing I am your friend as well as your dad’,
‘It is about being smart with a developing mind, knowing at times I will have to be cruel to be kind’,
‘Setting clear goals and pathway in life, and respecting all women be it sister or wife’,
‘Use knowledge, be honest, take pride in your skin, giving up ain’t an option if you want to win’,
‘Celebrate your skin tone, the shape of your nose, the texture of your hair and how your soul grows’,
‘Don’t do as I do, you must find your own way, my role as your dad is to guide not to say’,
‘Love all that you are, be all you can be, learn nothing in life ever, ever comes free’,
‘Sacrifice and success and doing your best, knowing when to say no, when you must rest’,
‘Be a respectable person, know when to butt out, do not act like a gangster or live with self doubt’,
‘Respect all your elders, do not fear the word fail, or sell out your culture, or put it on sale’,
‘Have morals and values as part of your plan, and you will make the transition from a boy to a man’,
‘And remember as a man always reach for the sky, and men ain’t men if they say they can’t cry’,
‘Decisions in life will get broken and wrecked if there is an absence of things like love and respect’,
‘So, as I have said’,
‘My mother gave birth to an innocent child, another brother from the ghetto born gentle and wild’,
‘I had a nomad for a father so we lived on our own, for most of my life I had to go it alone’,
‘But I now have the tools to create a life plan, and I have made the transition from a boy to a man’,
‘But you cannot go on the journey if you run away scared, so get ready, move forward and make sure you are prepared’.
It was beyond the scope of the YPP project to commission more research on the needs of BME parents in prison. However, there is clearly a need for further research into the needs of all BME parents and particularly BME mothers and the development of culturally relevant parenting programmes. Otherwise BME parents will continue to vote with their feet and not utilise the existing services on offer in custody or the community.

**KEY FACTS - FOREIGN NATIONAL PARENTS IN CUSTODY**

- It is extremely difficult for foreign national prisoners to maintain family contact, especially fulfilling their roles as parents. This is particularly the case for foreign national women prisoners, of whom nearly three-quarters are mothers, compared to two-thirds for the overall prison population.

- There are 8,937 foreign national prisoners (defined as anyone without a UK passport), about one in eight (12 per cent) of the prison population.

- One in five women in prison are foreign nationals. (‘Forgotten Prisoners, PRT May 2004c.)

There has been a rapid rise in the number of foreign national prisoners. One in five women in prison are foreign nationals, most of whom have been convicted for drug importation. For many of them their offending was a way of supporting their children. Foreign national parents needs will inevitably be different to British national parents and in particular methods for keeping in touch will be very distinct. Separation from family in an alien environment can mean that foreign nationals’ mental health needs are often greater than for other prisoners. ‘Many of them are likely to feel desperate and vulnerable, and possibly be at risk of self-harm’ (PRT, 2004c).

The Prison Service has recently negotiated a contract to allow foreign national prisoners to make calls home at significantly reduced costs. However in ‘Forgotten Prisoners’ (PRT, 2004c) foreign national prisoners still face difficulties with phone calls, airmail letters and all areas of family contact.

‘Forgotten Prisoners’ (PRT, 2004c), found that foreign national prisoners’ needs have been ignored; for example they are often ill-prepared for release because their language skills prevented them from participating in resettlement programmes. It concluded that their needs can best be met by implementing a specific Prison Service Order on foreign national prisoners that sets out a coherent strategy. Such a strategy could cover the provision of translated information, support for prisoners and contact with families.
The BME population has risen rapidly and disproportionately to the general population in recent years. They are more likely than the rest of the population to have experience social exclusion factors such as homelessness, unemployment, and mental health problems.

BME parents are less likely to use community health services than other young parents and less likely to participate in prison-based parenting and family support initiatives. Most parenting training is delivered by white women. Diversity is rarely discussed in relation to parenting. Examples of culturally specific programmes were rare and there is an urgent need for research into of the potential for arts-based, culturally specific programmes.

The proportion of foreign national prisoners has also grown rapidly - particularly the female population of whom three-quarters are mothers. Foreign national prisoners as a group are often ignored. There is a need for a coherent strategy, which should incorporate innovative and effective approaches to maintaining contact with their families.
KEY FACTS: PARTNERS AND FAMILIES OF YOUNG PARENTS IN CUSTODY

- It is estimated that 150,000 children have a parent in prison. Seven per cent of children during their time at school experience the imprisonment of a father (DfES, 2003).

- Prisoners’ families including their children, often experience increased financial, housing, emotional and health problems during a sentence (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002).

- 30 per cent of prisoners’ children suffer significant mental health problems compared to 10 per cent of the general population (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002).

- During a sentence 45 per cent of offenders lose contact with their families and many separate from their partners (Nacro, 2000).

- Just over half, 55 per cent, of male prisoners described themselves as living with a partner before imprisonment and a third of female prisoners described themselves as living with a husband or partner before imprisonment (Hamlyn, B & Lewes, D, 2000).

- The Home Office has established that ‘good family ties can reduce a prisoner’s risk of re-offending by six times’ (Home Office, 2002).

- At 26th September 2003, 134 prisoners were held over 50 miles from their committal court town and 10,800 were held over 100 miles away (Letter from Paul Goggins, Minister for Prisons & Probation to Annette Brooke MP, 18th December 2003).

- The number of prison visits has fallen by a third in the past five years, and there has been a more than 20 per cent rise in the prison population. The Government’s Social Exclusion Unit found that many families have great difficulty getting through to prisons to book visits (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002).

PARTNERS AND FAMILIES OF YOUNG PARENTS IN CUSTODY

In this section the views of partners of prisoners who were involved in the focus groups are given. Examples of good practice for supporting partners and families are given at the end of this section.

What do we know about prisoners’ families?

Relatively little is known about prisoners’ families. Families do not readily identify themselves to teachers, health care professionals or to social workers for fear that their children might be taken into care or that the information might not be treated sensitively or confidentially. This was confirmed
during the course of the action research programme. Because they travelled long distances to visits and had specific transport booked, the families were often unable to participate in focus groups. Therefore, most of these consultations with partners and families were undertaken by researchers over the phone after making initial contact at visits. Dr Nancy Loucks in a report on prisoner’s families in Scotland concluded:

> ‘The profile remains fragmented and inadequate as a basis for a coherent strategic response to the needs of prisoner’s families.’
> (Cited in Loucks, 2004)

Research has repeatedly shown that the imprisonment of a relative places great strain on other family members. Loucks (2004) in her interviews with prisoners’ families found that:

- All need emotional and practical help to cope
- Most were living in deprived areas with childcare responsibilities
- For many the experience of imprisonment aggravates underlying problems: financial hardship, social isolation, childcare problems, health problems, relationship difficulties, substance misuse, the threat of homelessness
- The impact on children and teenagers is significant and enduring.

**Information for families outside**

Work done by Action for Prisoners’ Families (APF, 2003b) found that no information is routinely given to families at any point during the criminal justice process. From arrest through to release, the needs and concerns of families on the outside are rarely considered. Fear of stigma and discrimination means families suffer in silence. The Prisoners’ Families helpline provides essential information and support to families who often have no one else to turn to. Data they have gathered over the past year from running the phone line highlights the issues and difficulties experienced by families and friends. In it’s response to the Green Paper ‘Every Child Matters’, Action for Prisoners’ Families (APF, 2003b) reported that families and children of offenders do not generally access mainstream family support services, and where they do so, they are reluctant to disclose their family circumstances. But, when consulted, both adults and young people with a prisoner in the family express a need for confidential, non-judgemental services. APF recommends specialist, local prisoners’ family support groups. Experience shows that access to mainstream services such as Home Start is best achieved alongside specialist training for those staff on the needs of this group. Many families remain ‘under cover’ for fear of stigma being attached to them.

Families experience huge barriers in trying to maintain relationships during a prison sentence. This is in part explained by the distance from home – almost one quarter of families face a five hour round trip to visit. The three biggest problems raised by families were travel, financial difficulties and the need for emotional support.

Most prisons operate a telephone booking line for families to arrange visits. These are frequently understaffed and open restrictive hours.

Families on low income are entitled to claim financial assistance from the Assisted Prison Visits Unit, for the cost of visiting. However, despite efforts by APVU many families are unaware of this benefit because of the lack of information circulated to families.

Yots, probation and court staff, should have information available to give to families about procedures for contacting prisoners when in custody, and information about assisted visits that they can send into prison. This should be available in a number of languages. They should also be able to provide contact details of local organisations that can offer them support. Information on benefit changes when a partner goes inside, housing benefit, informing an employer for example, can be difficult. Help and support from outside agencies with these practical issues is important.
More detailed information about specific concerns arising for families when a member goes to prison is useful. The APF Pack, the Outsiders (2004), is an example of a good resource which includes information on what to say to children when a parent goes to prison, how to cope when a partner is inside and covers lots of other concerns arising for partners as well as a list of contact organisations. There will however be some information, systems and procedures, which are specific to a prison. This information should be made available to families and prisoners on reception or posted to them.

One of the issues to arise out of our research is that partners of young parents in custody often have little contact with outside agencies in the community. Engaging with them at the point where a partner goes into custody and supporting them at this time, might help to encourage them to use support agencies, both during this crisis time when a partner is in custody and once a relationship is established. This will hopefully then continue after the partner is released.

**Effect on Children**

The imprisonment of a parent can have significant impact on a child. Major changes may include: moving house, financial hardship, increased stress, loss of contact with family members, children taken into care, change of school. Many children are not told. Those told rarely talk about it for fear of repercussions. Many children feel a range of emotions. They may fear they will lose the other parent; they will be bullied and people may find out.

The following comments on experience of school were made by children with an imprisoned parent:

‘School helps me forget; must be kept a secret; some children take the mick; my friends think he is at work; they bully me; teachers do not know; I really miss my dad taking me to school; and sometimes I cry on the way home.’

These children may also experience significant guilt over the imprisonment of a parent:

‘I want him to come home; he will not come home; there will not be enough money; and it is my fault he had to go out and rob.’

(Bennett, 2003).

A number of children’s and criminal justice agencies have long been concerned that children’s’ rights are not considered when a parent is imprisoned have expressed concern about the impact and damage to children and ultimately on the community.

‘The children of prisoners do not enjoy any special rights in the UK children’s rights are not considered when a parent is sent to prison, yet their lives are turned upside down. There is no official system nor any special services for passing on information about their situation and providing support. Those who could be usefully aware of their needs - Social Services, educators, health workers, probably usually do not know.’

(Save the Children 1998).

‘The UK has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which commits to implementing a comprehensive set of rights for children, including, the children of prisoners. The convention emphasises the importance of listening to children and taking their views into consideration in establishing their best interests (Articles 3 and 12). It also sets out the rights of children (Articles 28 & 29) to protection from abuse and neglect. These principles are also laid down in the Children Act 1989. However, such rights cannot be translated into reality for prisoners’ children, who have historically been ignored, if there is a basic lack of information about their needs.’

(Howard League for Penal Reform, 2003)
Furthermore, visiting parents in prison can often be a traumatic experience for children and most prison staff will not be trained in child care or family liaison work. Many voluntary organisation and charities have worked on improving play areas for children and making facilities more child friendly. Kids VIP has been particularly effective in training staff to adopt child friendly practice.

‘Children will always visit prisons and we all have a responsibility to them. Thus, let us endeavour to make visits less daunting and enable the father-child relationship to develop.’ (Bennett, 2003).

**Prisoners' families' perceptions**

‘Staff at the prison have been fine, but I wouldn’t want to talk to anyone – no contact person, but haven’t needed to or wished to.’

A young women at one site with FCDO posts said she had never heard of the FCDO or the existence of such a post; she didn’t know any staff, had not really met any; would just ring the prison if she had any problems or a query. She had phoned to say she couldn’t make a visit, but staff didn’t pass this information on so the prisoner ended up going to the visit anyway and just sitting there, wondering why his visitor was not there. Another said she had seen posters for FCDOs but had not contacted them.

‘just get on with things… grin and bear it.’

Another said she had got to know all the staff who she had been impressed with. However, she found it upsetting when they told her to keep the children seated. One child in particular is quite difficult to manage; she tries to take them on bonding visits one at a time. She felt they could do with more toys, with different toys so the kids don’t get tired of them.

Another said she didn’t know any of the prison staff but was familiar with their faces and would just ring the prison if she had any questions or difficulties; she hadn’t heard of FCDOs. She added that there were always different staff and that it was sometimes difficult to get to recognise faces.

One young woman said female staff didn’t pass messages on and they told her they could only pass messages on in ‘life or death’ situations.

**Keeping in touch**

‘I keep in contact through visits, letters and phone calls; phone calls can be a bit short, but no complaints, not too bad.’

One partner talked about having daily telephone contact. She visits once a week, but has a double visit (bonding and regular). Families have had problems getting information when they ring prisons, depending on the staff who deal with them. One said his girlfriend rang to say the visit was changed but the officer didn’t tell him until the day of the visit.

APF is calling on the Prison Service to improve its telephone booking lines and visits rooms to cope with the increased number of prisoners now being sent to prison. Families trying to book visits find telephones are unanswered or constantly engaged. Despite the rise in the number of people being sent to prison, very little has been done to accommodate the potential increase in children and families wanting to visit their relatives. Family contact is crucial to reducing re-offending. Urgent attention must be given to improving telephone and visiting facilities.
The partners of the young men interviewed had a lot to say about visits. Their perceptions are expressed below.

‘I go up to visit him a few times a week; his parents take me for the regular visits, but I take the train for bonding visits; time of visits are fine, no problems with transport.’

‘Difficult getting money for the train; get a lift if possible, but not always an option; if can’t make the visit, leave a message, but staff take inmates down to the visits room for their visit anyway.’

One young woman said that the visits themselves are okay, but she has ‘social anxiety’ problems and it would help her to have a smaller room, a bit more privacy, and fewer people. She generally does okay if she sits with her back to others.

‘Not enough time, other people there for visits who are not having bonding visits, so not allowed to walk about, staff shout at us to sit down – has always been like that; staff shout at the kids as well.’

‘Should be allowed to walk about – an outside area or something; nothing really there for them to do – kids get bored! Prisoners shouldn’t have to wear their prison uniform for bonding visits.’

‘Go to bonding visits and regular visits; take the train – fairly straightforward, though can be a bit crowded for bonding visits – get to know other mums and kids that way!’

‘Would be good to be able to walk around outside during bonding visits.’

‘Could use more toys, with variation of the toys over time so the kids don’t get tired of them.’

‘Don’t like the visits – table separates them; better at Greenock – had lower, smaller, round table, so seemed closer/less of a barrier.’

‘Partner isn’t allowed to stand up at the regular visit, though can walk about in crèche area during bonding visit; varies according to staff, i.e. yesterday we weren’t allowed to get up at all.’

One woman said they have to go outside visits area to change a nappy. They can now take a bottle in, but are not allowed to bring in jars of baby food. She said she wouldn’t use food provided by the prison. They currently have wipes available, but these are very cheap ones she wouldn’t want to use on her baby.

‘Would like to make things better for other people when they visit in future; visits area and equipment is dirty; baby is too small for a high chair, yet only two bouncy chairs are available, and these are filthy and broken – not allowed to take in own chairs or prams, end up having to hold baby for two hours straight, which gets very difficult.’

Some partners said that they are not allowed to get up and get the child if they’re up and running around. One woman interviewed had two very active kids and found this could be a problem. Others said prison staff will interrupt bonding visits to say they’re talking to their partner too much and not enough to the child.

‘Would prefer to have a half-day visit or something once a month rather than two hours once a week – partner is missing out on the little things, like pushing the baby in a pram and seeing how she’s progressing – he even writes about this in his letters – missing out on the little things! Perhaps a secure bit of garden for bonding visits?’
The role of the Visitors’ Centre:

There is no standard format for a visitors’ centre. Therefore they vary in structure, staffing, funding, hours of opening, and to what degree and in what way they are involved in standard visit procedures. PRT and other agencies believe that every prison should have a properly funded Visitors’ Centre with secure and appropriate funding from the Home Office. PRT and APF conducted research into the role of visitors’ centres and the role they can play in maintaining family ties. (PRT, 2001b). The report concluded that there is unexplored potential in visitors’ centres. These centres could also be used for a range of parenting and family services to give access to prisoners’ families such as Sure Start and Home Start.

Special Visits

This was not a specific subject area in the interviews and it may be that some of the comments above made about visits refer to special visits. One partner interviewed said that what she wanted from this project was improved visits and the ability to do more with kids on bonding visits (i.e. outdoor park) – ‘kids won’t want to visit dads if they’re really bored; visits not long enough’.

Courses/ links with outside organisations

Partners were asked about their contact with outside agencies or whether they had participated in any parenting courses either in custody or in the community or whether they knew about any courses their partners had participated in. Our findings demonstrate that their use and knowledge of support services was low.

‘Wouldn’t make links with outside organisations; I did go to ante-natal classes at the local health centre – got lots of information and could ask questions.’

‘No contact with organisations from outside, in or out of the prison; attended one ante-natal class prior to baby’s birth, but didn’t like it and didn’t return.’

‘Partner hasn’t said much about the parenting course – just that he was doing one; idea sounds interesting to me?’

‘Partner did the prison’s parenting course (obligatory for bonding visits); she has the video he made for the boys – really good, though the boys get upset sometimes (want to hold Daddy’s hand, etc.) – really difficult!’

‘Went to One Plus (organisation which works with single parents in Glasgow); health visitor suggested I do this – it offers courses, and they pay you when you complete them, but the courses clash with my visits to the prison; they do have a crèche there.’

One partner said she doesn’t have a health visitor at present, she had recently moved, and health visitor at GP’s office has been off sick; prior to baby’s birth, midwife came to her house regularly (considered high risk due to her depression). Another said she had no contact with outside organisations apart from her social worker.’

‘Partner did the parenting course but didn’t say much about it, though has made some pictures for baby (laminated drawings of Winnie the Pooh, signed for her).’

‘Has done courses at the boys’ nursery including first aid, parenting group, etc.’

Release

Partners were asked about their hopes and fears once partners were released. The findings demonstrate that whilst most partners were excited by the prospect of release they also had anxieties and fears. They did not in general seem to have any support in place to address these.
One woman said she was looking forward to being together with her partner on release but acknowledged she wouldn’t know what to expect when her partner gets out. She thought she’d adjust fairly quickly, but it would be strange for him. Many others expressed similar feelings and said it would be helpful to have information about how to cope on release or what to expect before the release date. Some also expressed concern about getting used to each other again after a period apart. One partner felt things would go well as long as her partner did not drink again. Others expressed concern about the possibilities of their partners gaining employment following release and some said that they had never worked prior to custody.

‘My son is looking forward to having his dad back, though it may take him a while to get used to it; we’ll just wait and see what happens.’

Interviews with partners and families highlighted the difficult circumstances many of them were in - often unsupported. One partner said they had no support from her partner’s family and most of his extended family had been in prison before anyway. Another partner was on incapacity benefit and medication for depression, with no support. The DVD produced by Relate to accompany this report explores relationships between young fathers in prison and their partners and families outside.

**Example of good practice:**

**PACT Visitors’ Centres**

Visitors’ Centres are a key resource to provide support and information for the families and friends of prisoners.

Dartmoor Prison has a visitors’ centre funded by the Community Fund as well as local trusts. The visitors’ centre offers a warm and welcoming environment for families of prisoners where they can wait for visits. The centre has affordable refreshments, a quiet private area where sensitive issues can be discussed, and a play corner. Advice, support and information are available from the PACT volunteers who staff the centre. All the volunteers are trained and accredited by the Open College Network.

The philosophy of their approach is that young people and offenders can find it difficult to open up to professionals so it is important to train professionals for a support role in visitors’ centres. They actively recruit ex-offenders who have direct experience of many of the issues that prisoners and their families face.

PACT currently run other visitors’ centres at the following prisons: HMP Belmarsh, Holloway, Pentonville, Woodhill and HMP Wormwood Scrubs.

All their Centres aim to support visitors by providing the following services:

- Information about the prison they are visiting including visiting procedures
- Liaison and negotiation with prison staff; representing visitors’ needs
- Information on relevant support and advice groups and organisations
- Emotional support - staff are available to listen and advise in confidence, without judgement
- Support and guidance for families visiting prisoners with drug or alcohol problems
- Information and guidance for parents and carers supporting children of prisoners
- Information on financial assistance with travel and low cost overnight accommodation
- A staffed play area in the prison visiting hall
- A coffee bar serving low cost refreshments
- Toilets and baby changing facilities
- A welcoming environment where visitors can wait before their visit and prior to travelling home.
**PACT:**

The Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT) have been awarded further funding under the Home Office Invest to Save programme to develop and extend their support services for prisoners’ families in Dartmoor, Channings Wood and Exeter. The work is supported by the South West Probation Service. The project will seek to support prisoners’ families by:

- Opening a new Visitors’ Centre
- Employing two family based support workers based at Plymouth and Exeter to work with families of prisoners from all three establishments
- Establishing family-friendly services in all three prisons, including play projects within the prisons for the children, as well as relationship courses within prisons
- Training 10 volunteer mentors to support family’s pre and post sentence.

**Manchester Prison Visitors’ Centre**

Part of the Substance Misuse and Family Support Worker role at HMP Manchester is to offer information, advice and practical support to visitors who had concerns or questions about prisoners’ problems or who had concerns about either a family member or themselves in regard to drug and alcohol use. Initially the emphasis was on assisting people to access treatment, information sharing and actively discouraging attempts to take drugs into prisons. They also wanted to ensure that individuals knew exactly what help was available for those in prison with a drug problem.

Since November 2002 they have worked with 400 individuals or families. Over half of them required some information and reassurance. However, the rest have required much more support; some of them have had assistance spanning twelve months and many are seen weekly. With the help of social work students from Stockport College they have been able to undertake home visits and extend what’s on offer. As well as helping forty individuals access treatment options ranging from counselling to scripting services, they have helped people to access a huge range of help, including housing assistance, medical help, childcare assistance and links to schemes including Sure Start and Home Start, benefit and welfare rights assistance, links to Domestic Violence agencies and help with courses and employment. They have helped families to remain in touch and in some cases prevented relationships falling apart.

**The Outsiders – Information booklets for the partners and families of prisoners**

This is a new series of five booklets published by APF. These survival guides discuss the issues faced by families, and provide practical information on how to cope when a family member is in prison. The five booklets include; Sent to prison, Telling the children, Dealing with separation, Preparing for release and Keeping in touch. They are free to families and distributed through members and supporters of APF and the Prisoners Families Helpline.

**Prisoners’ Families and Friends Service**

PFFS have been providing support for the relatives and friends of prisoners in London for 38 years. They provide trained home visitors, run a family centre (the Swan Centre), a telephone help line and are present in some courts. They provide pre and post release support. This project is called ‘Outlook’. They hold pre release discussion groups for families in the Swan Centre and offer one-to-one sessions for relatives and friends.
**HM YOI Hindley**

The Family Link Worker at HM YOI Hindley works with young men in custody to provide support, advice and information to their families and carers. The post had twelve months initial funding from the YJB. The family information pack developed by the FLW offers practical advice i.e. travel directions, assisted visits information, information about property, useful contacts/helping agencies and information provided by the Partners of Prisoners and Families Support Group (POPs). Pastoral care and support is available to the young people. The FLW provides an outline of a typical day at Hindley, which helps to dispel some of the myths about prison life.

The pack introduces the family worker and the role with a direct line for further information or support. Families approach her with a range of issues from wanting general reassurance that their young person has settled in, to concerns about self-harm, bullying, no contact, property/postal order queries, visits through to ‘Happy Birthdays’ and ‘You’re a Dad’ messages. On average they receive about twenty to twenty five calls a week from families, usually in the initial custodial remand period, when families’ needs are greatest. Ongoing support is available however as the family requires it, throughout the sentence and sometimes beyond. The family liaison officer is available to meet with families before or after a visit and has spent time with many families arriving for their first visit or if a problem or concern has arisen.

During a young person’s induction period they meet with all newly received inmates on a one-to-one basis. This is an opportunity to introduce the role and to establish any concerns. Identifying these early is vital for the well being of a young person, particularly in the initial period in custody. Each young person is given a trainee induction pack. This explains the importance of maintaining family ties and how to keep in touch with family/friends by letter, telephone and visits. The family worker offers them support and assistance in making contact, or makes contact on their behalf, helping to restore/establish relationships.

**Action for Prisoners’ Families**

All prisons were challenged to be more family friendly as part of a scheme run by APF. In cooperation with the Prison Service, the Department for Education and Skills, and the National Family and Parenting Institute, the Family Friendly Prison challenge took place in October 2004 to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the UN Year of the Family. Prisons were challenged to run a family friendly event to improve the time prisoners spend with their children, such as a family day or extended children’s visit.

**European work with families**

**EUROCHIPS: (The European Committee for Children of Imprisoned Parents)**

Is a European-wide network founded in 2000 to work on behalf of children separated from an imprisoned parent. It is based in the Paris suburb of Montrouge, sharing the facilities of the FREP office, and is currently financed by the Bernard van Leer Foundation in The Hague. EUROCHIPS is seeking to break down barriers and to achieve new ways of thinking, acting and interacting on prisoners’ children. It is doing so by: acting as a voice for children of imprisoned parents and sensitising the public, magistrates, judges, childcare professionals and relevant organization and administrations.

Eurochips is drafting a handbook of practice and experience in various EU countries. It is building a research and information centre that will, among other things, provide more accurate statistics on the number of children affected. It is also seeking to improve visiting facilities inside prisons by setting up special child-friendly visiting areas in all prisons. EUROCHIPS’s partner in the UK is APF.
**FREP (Fédération des Relais Enfants Parents)** is an umbrella organisation set up in 1994 to bring together 17 associations, including 13 Relais Enfants Parents (REPs), throughout France. The original REP was launched in 1986 in Montrouge to work on behalf of children separated from an imprisoned parent. The main objective at that time was to ease the stigma of imprisonment, and to work to restore the bond between a child and his or her parent, thus preventing any kind of break in the relationship. However, the activities of the REPs quickly expanded to include other situations in which child-parent relationships are vulnerable. These include illness, drug addiction, separation from parents due to loss, conflict and/or custody.

**FREP / FRANCE**: is the main organisation in France that deals with children of incarcerated parents. Its four principal actions in this field cover:

- **a) REP-trained volunteers accompany children when they visit their parents in prison.** The accompaniment is handled by REP if family members of the child are unable or unwilling to accompany the child. Volunteers commit themselves to the child for the duration of the parent’s imprisonment, thus ensuring a certain degree of continuity so crucial to a child.

- **b) Creating child-friendly play areas inside prisons for visiting purposes**

  These allow all children during regular prison visiting hours to meet the parent in a child-friendly setting. The playrooms are staffed by a REP childcare worker.

- **c) Craft workshops for imprisoned mothers**

  REP organises craft workshops for imprisoned mothers to produce “relational” objects that are sent to children. The workshops, staffed by a volunteer and a REP professional, allow mothers to talk about their feelings and discuss their difficulties in explaining to the children wrongdoing and imprisonment; they also help reinforce the woman’s identity as a mother. Over the last 12 years this has been extended to fathers.

- **(d) Individual support sessions for imprisoned fathers (Soutien aux parents détenus)**

  Imprisoned fathers are provided with individual support sessions to discuss visits and letters from their children, and the difficulties in remaining a father behind bars. Men are frequently less inclined than women to talk about family issues and fatherhood in group settings. This offers a forum for communication.

**BELGIUM**

REPs in Brussels is a not-for profit organisation that works to facilitate the bond between children and imprisoned parents. The Belgium authorities do not run any courses in their prisons to assist or encourage inmates to assume their responsibilities towards their families or their children. Activities include:

- **a) Group discussions**

  (Groupes de parole) with mothers and fathers in prison staffed by professionals and held on a regular basis, to reinforce identity as a parent and offer an opportunity to talk about their feelings and discuss explaining imprisonment to children. During sessions parents can make ‘relational’ objects for their children that are sent by REP-Belgique to the child – these serve as a symbolic link. Each group has 10 parents and is run once a week or once a fortnight.

- **b) Child-friendly play area** - Where imprisoned parents can spend time alone with children (up to the age of 14). A Relais staff member is present, often left alone by the prison staff, in this way trust is built up. When a child visits his father, the visit is arranged without the mother being present so the father can strengthen links and concentrate on his child.

- **c) Individual and family-based support sessions**

  Interviews in prison with a REP psychologist take place at the request of the parent. An analysis is made of the parent’s need. The parent is advised of his or her rights. REP support includes orientation sessions to determine what support mode is best.

- **D) Volunteers accompany children to visit parents in prison**
The programme is less well-organised than in France, approximately 15 volunteers – therefore it is too small to satisfy the needs of children concerned. As in France, the state does not help to finance the costs of visits costs. A prisoner can request a retransfer to be in a prison near his family.

The idea of running ‘parenting courses’ similar to those run in the UK is anathema to the French authorities. There is a cultural resistance in France towards the idea of ‘educating’ parents. In France, there is a strict division between the role of the state and the responsibility of an individual citizen and his or her family. It may even be a breach of a citizen’s human rights for the state to tell people how to bring up their children. However, this attitude is beginning to change and, provided that the activity in the prison to ‘improve’ parenting is described as ‘meetings’, ‘travail en groupe’ or ‘action de soutien’ it is deemed permissible.

The question ‘are you a parent?’ is always asked by the Greffe (an official of the court) of people brought before the French Courts on criminal charges and facing custody. Statistics are produced on the basis of the answers. The effectiveness of this procedure is not clear as answers to the question are not always reliable, sometimes because the parent is an illegal immigrant (in France this status can involve a criminal charge and up to three month’s imprisonment before deportation) or does not wish to acknowledge parenthood. The Greffe only recognises those children who have been ‘déclaré’ i.e. legally registered, and for whom the parent has ‘autorité parentale’. If not married to the other parent, the test for this used to be proof of living with the other parent for twelve months. Recently, the French law on bail has been changed to require it to be granted to all accused who have a child aged under ten, save in exceptional circumstances.

As in France the Belgian authorities only recognise parenthood if the parent has legally acknowledged the child. There are many reasons why parents may not want to acknowledge their child. REP estimates 20,000 children in Belgium have a parent in prison.

CHAPTER 7 SUMMARY - PARTNERS AND FAMILIES OF YOUNG PARENTS IN CUSTODY

- Nearly half of all offenders lose contact with their families during a sentence. Prisoners’ families and their children are likely to experience increased financial, housing and mental health problems during a partner’s sentence (Nacro, 2000, The Forgotten Majority).
- Prisoners’ families are largely an invisible group. Little is known about their profile and needs. No information is routinely given to families at any point in the CJS. Family issues have become a lower priority for probation services as their focus has shifted from a welfare model to risk assessment and enforcement.
- Prisoners’ families are unlikely to access mainstream health and support services for fear of being stigmatised. They have limited engagement with prison establishments. There are few prison-based initiatives designed to integrate support between prisoners and their families outside; they are not consulted on resettlement plans and rarely involved in parenting and family support initiatives.
- They experience a range of difficulties with visits including the cost and distance of travel, booking visits, controlling children and negative attitudes from staff.
After Release
Chapter Eight

Release and Resettlement

Preparing prisoners for their return to the community is a key Prison Service objective. Research has demonstrated that successful integration into society reduces the likelihood of re-offending. Many of the young parents we spoke to would welcome some support on release. Few knew of sources of help or people to turn to outside the family. For many, agencies which support young parents in general, rather than ex-prisoners in particular, were seen as preferable.

Many of the prisoners interviewed for this project said that resettlement was poor and did not meet their needs. The quality of resettlement work and the extent of provision varies from institution to institution, and is better for some age groups than others. It is also affected by other pressures, such as under-staffing and prison population numbers.

Young Fathers’ Views on Resettlement

Most young men we interviewed said they wanted to be a good father but peer pressure, drugs, poor housing, and ability to provide money get in the way. These young men seemed to really want help but were feeling hopeless about the possibility of change.

‘The main concern of nearly everybody here is how to provide for your kids.’

‘I really want a good job, and to have a house like others, but when you’ve been a con nobody wants to know you. They think you’ll never change, but how can you change if you don’t get the chance.’

‘I want to provide for my lads. I think that’s what a dad should do. My dad was never around, but my Mam was always there for us. I feel I’ve let them down, but I do the jobs to get them things. They don’t do without.’

‘I will try to settle down because of my child. Drugs are biggest problem for this, boredom is a problem too.’

‘I don’t know what would help me be a better dad or stop the things I do. I think now I’ve got kids things have to change. But how do I change? Who will help? Staff don’t really care. There are some good ones, but what can they do? We do all these courses, but I don’t think they can get me a job. What’s the point of being on benefits? It’s not enough to get anything.’

‘I’ve been in care since I was 13, then in and out of foster care and prison. I don’t know anything else. Who is going to listen to me or give me a job now? You have to want to change. It has to come from your own mind, not what people say you should do. I’m bored with this way of life, but what else do I know?’

These comments from young fathers demonstrate how deep the feeling of social exclusion is. Resettlement courses can cover a whole range of issues including relationship building, support and advice on finding work, and accessing outside support agencies. There are many anxieties associated with release from custody which, if not adequately addressed, just contribute to the revolving door syndrome and negate the very positive outcomes of these parenting and family support initiatives in custody.
‘I need help to build bridges with my ex-girlfriend and her family, or I’ll never get to see my son. Probation can’t help me with that. Then once I get out I’ll have to find work, get benefits sorted out ……so I can see me just going back to my old ways, and I don’t want to.’

‘I want proper resettlement. I don’t mean things handed to me on a plate, but a real chance to change and clear up the past ……move on from what I’ve done.’

‘I do need a lot of support if I am going to keep clean. I need someone to listen to me and help me find work.’

‘The main support needed is housing benefits and a job. Then I can start to feel like a Dad.’

‘The drug team have given me some advice but it’s easy when you are inside. I need help when I get out. We all say we are not coming back in but most of us do something - not working - right.’

‘In the criminal system, I always thought jail was about rehabilitation. If you go into prison right and you don’t get nothing offered to you, when you are coming out you are going to be forced into the same situation that put you in here in the first place, which to me is just stupid. You are sending someone to prison to rehabilitate themselves; you are not offering them nothing. You are just basically being told to go and sit in your cell and think about what you did. I can think about that all day long but it aint going to change my situation.’

‘If there was a scheme, maybe six months before the end of your sentence, you went on a course to find out, or even if they asked you about your ideas on what you want to do when you leave, or maybe gave you a little help with things getting in contact with certain things. Me personally, I would like to do youth work if there was a thing where you could set me up with a youth team, talk to kids and do things like that. I would be happy doing that, I am not asking for somebody to give me a job just an opportunity to do that.’

‘I think they should have someone you know on the outside like a careers worker within the prison, so that when you are near to the end of your sentence you can go and see them and do same things as outside. So when you come out you are not just sitting in your house thinking where are you going to get your money. At least you would have the opportunity to decide what you want to do and how to go about it.’

‘I need help with resettlement but people just want you to fill forms in - it doesn’t get you anywhere.’

‘Not having work is my main worry. I’ve lost my job and what chance will I have of getting another now?’

‘I am lucky I have got a home to go to; my girlfriend and I are going to get married. I do need a lot of support to keep clean. I need someone to listen to me and help me find work.’

‘It is difficult being a good dad when you don’t have a job or enough money. It makes you feel crap about yourself.’

These comments illustrate how unaware young men are of what support is on offer when they are released. Depending on what establishment they are in, they feel that too little is done in terms of resettlement work. Support and courses need to be able to engage them as young men who need employment, training opportunities, and support settling into their communities. Fatherhood should not be viewed in isolation.
**Staff Feedback:**

In one establishment, staff felt that pre-release courses should look at preparing prisoners and partners for living together, as well as covering housing, benefits and employment. There was also some concern that work done in the prison was rarely followed up on release. Staff from two establishments said that they suggest different options to prisoners and point them in the direction of agencies and support networks. However, once the prisoner is released they are not in a position to follow up whether they have gained access to services.

**Some examples of good resettlement practice**

**Connexions**
The Youth Justice Board has put £8 million towards a three-year scheme that will see Connexions Advisors located within every Young Offender Institution. The funding will enable Connexions to refer young offenders to training courses under the Learning and Skills Council’s Entry 2 Employment Scheme before release into the community. Connexions will be able to refer young people to services immediately after release.

**Relationship Workshops**
Research done by Action for Prisoners’ Families found that fewer than half of the families interviewed were looking forward to the release of their relative. Nearly all the families expected problems, some spoke of being nervous or terrified. None had been involved in preparation for release courses. APF is working with relationship support organisations, such as Relate, to pilot workshops in a number of prisons, to allow prisoners and their partners to plan and prepare for release and resettlement.

Starting last year at HMP Winchester, a series of one day workshops were designed and delivered by Portsmouth Relate. The workshops focused on prisoners who were just about to be released and would be returning to live with a partner. Priority was given to those returning to a partner with children to support their parenting role. The partner was then contacted and invited to attend the workshop with the prisoner, inside the prison. The workshop allowed couples to explore, discuss and consider their relationship especially in terms of the changes and stresses that can be experienced during separation and then resettlement. The feedback and evaluation from these sessions were extremely positive. This included evaluation questionnaires following release which revealed that some couples that attended the course in the prison found the day so valuable that they were now attending local Relate Centres for further support.

Resettlement workshops based on the original pilots are now being rolled out in different categories of prisons involving a number of relationship support organisations, which means they will benefit from a range of approaches and expertise. Relationship workshops are taking place at the following prisons:

Acknowled, Ashwell, Askham Grange, Cardiff, Channings Wood, Dartmoor and Winchester.

**YMCA Partnerships in Prisons**
The partnerships in prisons programme has projects in nine prisons across England and aims to cut re-offending rates and build personal and social skills. The emphasis is on resettlement of the young people and giving them some useful skills for the outside. The Head of Learning and Skills at Wetherby YOI says the main aim is to give inmates a relevant qualification while they are inside. ‘Resettlement starts on day one in the prison. The second part of a Detention and Training Order is spent in the community, which is why we have a resettlement team made up of Connexions advisers, the Youth Offending Team and the YMCA. As well as being about accreditation, it is also about supporting a prisoner’s personal and social development, getting alongside them and building self esteem’.
**HMP Dartmoor**
Action for Prisoners Families instigated a pioneering family relationships course at HMP Dartmoor delivered by two local charities – Time for Families and the Exeter Community Family Trust, with assistance from PACT. The initiative aims to bring together prisoners and their partners on a one-day course to help them prepare for release.

'It is unbelievable that the present system expects a prisoner to walk out of the gates and resume family life without any preparation or thought for what might have changed at home. Courses such as this are vital if we are to tackle the growing number of relationships that break down during a partner’s time inside and help couples adjust to life together again.’ Lucy Gampell, Action for Prisoners’ Families.

**HMP Aylesbury/Toyota**
Toyota (GB) invested £350,000 in setting up and equipping mechanics workshops at HM YOI Aylesbury. The workshops lead to a national qualification (NVQ) level three in motor vehicle maintenance. The company contribute between £20-£30,000 per year in the form of cars, tools and training materials. They do not guarantee everyone a job but the scheme encourages dealers to take a serious look at Aylesbury ‘graduates’. Many have been successful in gaining employment.

**National Grid Transco Foundation**
National Grid Transco Foundation identified a chronic shortage of young people to train up as workers to renew the country’s gas distribution network. It set up a training programme in HMP Reading, initially as a pilot. All those who completed the first course are now out of prison and working for Transco contractors. The scheme is expanding and points the way to other employers to assist young offenders to gain relevant skills and a paid job.

**PRISE – Planned Resettlement into Sustainable Employment / RPS Rainer**
Prise is a national development partnership which consists of twenty seven voluntary, statutory and private sector organisations including the Youth Justice Board, the Prison Service, Connexions and the Department of Health. The aim of PRISE is to take a fresh look at the resettlement process for offenders aged 16-18, prior to sentence, throughout custody, back into the community and towards sustainable employment. The key objectives are the design, development, testing and production of seamless resettlement practice, an ‘inside-out’ resettlement mentoring model delivered from the point of sentence or before and the bench marking of service standards for community support agencies. Under the mentoring initiative a young person will be matched with a mentor from the community to which they will return prior to release. The project is being piloted in three localities across London. The YJB has also secured funding for independent evaluation of the model.

**Sure Start Swansea**
Sure Start in Swansea is pioneering a new system of support for fathers who have been released from prison. The scheme builds on research showing that parenting courses in prisons are enthusiastically attended by fathers but are ineffective without follow up support in the community.

Sure Start Swansea has begun running a 10-week parenting programme in the town’s prison and also acts as a buddy to fathers who are released. If a dad is released to return to another part of the country, the theory is that he locates his local Sure Start or another parenting support agency to help them.
**Doncaster Family Focus** run by the Hallam diocese is working with Deanne Valley Dads, managed by Rotherham YMCA to help inmates to maintain and enhance relationships with their children and provide ongoing support on release. Workers from Deanne Valley Dads are planning to establish a ‘buddy’ system between group members and dads at HMP Doncaster so that on release, if they live locally, they can attend one of their groups.

**Young mothers’ perceptions of resettlement**

Life after prison for women is often worse than they have anticipated. We heard about children experiencing problems that mothers had been unaware of during their time in custody, of changeable, unstable and unsatisfactory accommodation, of difficulties finding employment, debts and financial difficulties. Clear plans for reuniting children after release are necessary. Some mothers interviewed clearly knew in advance that their living arrangements, accommodation and employment prospects would be adversely affected by their imprisonment. Deterioration in these basic factors was likely to increase re-offending. Some felt that there was very little preparation for release. Particular concern was voiced about housing, benefits and drug and alcohol misuse support.

One woman was concerned about whether by the time she was released her daughter would want to come back and live with her.

‘I’m looking forward to going home … who wouldn’t be? You would be mad to want to stay here. But I’m worried. How will I cope? We’ll never get on. We’re stuck in this mess.’

‘Nobody tells you what to do or what it will be like when you get out.’

‘I know it’s an open prison and I can go into town once or twice a week with my baby, and twice on my own. But it’s not real. It’s not like being out there all the time and being a real mother, paying bills and everything.’

‘I’ll never get a job. I’ve never worked before, so who is going to take me on?’

‘I feel dependent on everyone else …… but I couldn’t manage on my own, I’m too young.’

‘I do get frightened when I think about going out. I’ll just have to get on with it. I would like help, but who can give it? I don’t know the groups and I don’t know if I could ask for it. I would like help to get home. It’s a long journey on my own; it’s stressful for my family.’

‘My Mam and Dad are divorced, but I’ve got brothers and sisters. I don’t see my Dad. He was never round much when we were younger. I don’t know if he knows I’m here or not …… I don’t care.’

‘The father of my baby doesn’t want to know. He hasn’t seen her. I don’t want him to. I would just get into more trouble. I’ve got to keep clean now I’ve got her to look after.’

‘If there was a place between a prison and home – but not a hostel – somewhere where people could help and teach you real things so you can live and not have your baby taken away. It might help stop girls doing drugs or stealing or whatever.’

‘Somewhere that was clean, and like a home. I would like that.’

According to the Social Exclusion Unit report (2002), only 24 per cent of women with a prior skill had the chance to put their skills into practice through prison work. Just 11 per cent of women received
help with housing queries whilst in prison. Home Office research (Singleton et al, 1998) has found that 41% of women in prison did not have accommodation arranged on release and only a third of women prisoners who wanted help and advice about benefits and debt received it. All of these factors inevitably impact on a mother’s ability to regain custody of their children.

**An example of good resettlement practice:**

**HMP YOI East Sutton Park – The Vision Project**  
**Peer Support group specialising in resettlement.**

Vision is a peer support group that offers constructive advice, guidance and support on a range of resettlement issues. Its aim is to work with the community of HM Prison East Sutton Park to empower women to achieve successful re-integration after release. It is particularly popular as it was designed and is run entirely by prisoners. They offer the following programme:

**Support structure** – Vision will conduct a needs analysis with every prisoner. This is a chance for individuals to discuss their needs and concerns and for subsequent support plans to be put in place.

**Evening Surgeries** – Vision holds open evening surgeries so that individuals are able to drop in at their leisure. The prisoners running the surgeries have links with relevant support groups who can provide specialist help to support individuals and their families.

**Outside agency surgeries** – they have teamed up with outside support agencies so that resettlement needs are addressed in a constructive and effective way. The Citizens Advice Bureau, New Bridge and Kent Careers Guidance visit once a month to meet individuals who require support.

**Housing advice** – on homelessness, home insurance, rent arrears and financial difficulties.

**Employment advice** is given on applying for jobs, compiling CVs, interview techniques, career guidance and looking for work. The Project held an open day for local employers to come in and find out more about working with the prison. As East Sutton Park is a category D open prison, many prisoners have outside employment.

**Vision job club** – has links with the Employment Services and other voluntary organisations. They can help to identify immediate employment opportunities whilst in custody and after release, make arrangements to claim Job Seekers Allowance the day after release, introduce prisoners to agencies to give support after release such as employment education, careers advice and training.

**Domestic violence** – supporting individuals to receive appropriate assistance from statutory and voluntary agencies within the community.

**RESSETLEMENT POLICY AND YOUNG PARENTS**

This section looks at current resettlement policy, considers how far parenting and family support are included within this agenda, and makes recommendations for future inclusion. Throughout this report it has been noted that whilst prisoners receive parenting training positively, it has limited impact once prisoners are released into the community, where re-offending rates are high.

The Social Exclusion Unit Report ‘Reducing Re-offending by ex-prisoners’ (2002) concluded that:

‘No-one is ultimately responsible for the rehabilitation process at any level – from national policy, to the level of the individual prisoner. Responsibility and accountability for outcomes can be very unclear.’
It called for an urgent cross-government approach to rehabilitation and reducing re-offending, with the implementation of a national, long-term Action Plan led by the Home Office.

It seems sensible that parenting and family work should be an integral part of the resettlement agenda. Research has found that family support can contribute to reducing re-offending.

‘As well as helping prevent re-offending in their own right, families can be a gateway to a number of other preventative factors, such as providing a stable home on release and increasing the likelihood of employment. Thus, I recognise the need to join up family, employment and other services in achieving successful resettlement.’
(Wrench, P., 2003)

Despite Government statements about urgency, a Reducing Re-offending National Action Plan was not produced by the Home Office until July 2004 (Home Office, 2004f). The plan is led by the National Offender Management Service. Central to the plan is ‘strategic direction and joined up working between agencies’. The National Offender Management Service (NOMS) was established to provide a seamless service from custody to community and to make full use of community penalties.

The Action Plan covers key rehabilitation areas including employment, training, accommodation, health, drugs and alcohol, finance and children and families. Many of these areas were identified by the young people in our research as subjects they needed to address. If the Action Plan is implemented then the risks of re-offending could be reduced and hence there is a higher likelihood that families will stay together.

Whilst we recognise the importance and impact of all the seven areas, it is not within the remit of this report to consider them all individually, but simply to look at to what extent children and families are included within the resettlement agenda.

Pathway 6: Children and Families of Offenders
The Plan charts the progress that has been made in the area of children and families and cites examples of good practice in prisons:
A number of family services have been established such as the Prisoners’ Families Help line APF, the Eastern Area Families Project – a partnership between the Prison Service, the Ormiston Trust and Lankelly Foundation – which broadly service prisoners’ families.
It highlights the important role of visitors’ centres: Visitors’ centres have an important role to play in helping to keep families together and enabling them to contribute to rehabilitation in a meaningful way and recognises that these centres could act as a gateway for a range of services to prisoner families. The Plan points to the need to develop support for children and families and refers to proposals made in the Green Paper ‘Every Child Matters’:
A new Directorate for Children and Families was established in 2003 by the Department for Education and Skills, under a Minister for Children, bringing together in one place most of the policy and delivery interests for children, young people and families.
The Plan highlights the services developed for families at risk that are seen as appropriate for children and families of offenders.
‘Every Child Matters’ Green Paper, included a focus on the children and families of prisoners, drawing attention to the financial, emotional and health problems children can suffer as a result of having a parent in prison. It also noted the lack of co-ordinated support for children and families of prisoners and invited views on what more could be done to improve services for this group. They asked whether information on parents (including imprisonment) should be shared between professionals as part of the drive to improve early identification of children at risk and provision of appropriate services to them.
**Key Action Area: Children and Families of Offenders**

Implementation of the Green paper will be the main vehicle for:

- Ensuring that the needs of children and families are met
- Examining barriers to information sharing between different parts of the criminal justice system
- Looking at ways of ensuring that information about a prisoner’s family circumstances is recorded systematically at all stages from arrest to imprisonment to release.

The inclusion of children and the families of offenders in the ‘Reducing Re-offending - National Action Plan’ is welcomed - (Pathway 6: Children and Families of Offenders). However, the Plan does not refer specifically to work with imprisoned parents. Instead, it refers to the DfES report ‘Every Child Matters’ (DfES, 2003) and highlights the range of services available for offenders’ children and families, such as Sure Start.

There are no proposals to include families in resettlement plans and no plans to integrate service support for young parents in prison and their children outside. Furthermore, whilst it is claimed that services such as Sure Start are meeting the needs of disadvantaged families, our research has found that these services are often failing to reach offenders’ families and parents released from custody. It is disappointing that this opportunity to include families fully in resettlement plans has not been utilised.

**Women and resettlement**

In March 2004, the Home Office produced The Women's Offending Reduction Plan (Home Office, 2004b) in order to provide a distinct response to women’s offending. This recommends the implementation of a programme of work to address the complex range of factors that affect women’s offending. The key areas for action include making community interventions and programmes more appropriate for women, meeting mental health needs, dealing with substance misuse, reviewing sentencing for women, building up an evidence base and providing training and guidance on gender issues. Again, the Plan does not focus specifically on involving families in the resettlement agenda or maintaining contact between mother and child during custody. However, it does suggest ways to divert women from custody into community-based support and ways to reduce the number of women in custody.

**Women’s Reducing Offending Reduction Programme (Home Office, 2004e).**

‘Policy makers, practitioners, police, courts, voluntary organisations, and others who have a role to play in the way that women offenders are dealt with, need to know what particular issues are important for women (Including the impact on their children and families), how to best deal with them and what will have the biggest impact in terms of addressing the factors that increase their risk of re-offending. For example, women are more likely to be the primary carers but are much less likely than men to have a partner to look after their children if they are sent to prison. Research shows that these children suffer not only as a result of separation from mothers, but also, particularly for those who end up in care, their own lives are subsequently disadvantaged with the increased risk of social exclusion for the next generation.’

**Young Offenders and resettlement:**

The YJB is piloting a resettlement model PRISE - Planned Resettlement Into Sustainable Employment. It is hoped this will lead to ‘the re-engineering of the resettlement process for offenders aged 15 to 18 from point of sentence, through custody, out into community and on to employment opportunity in an attempt to create a seamless sentence’. This resettlement model does address education, employment, drug and alcohol misuse, mental and physical health, attitude and self control, life skills,
housing, financial support, and debt management. However, it does not include the specific problems experienced by young parents. The YJB plans to set up a national Juvenile Resettlement Steering Group, involving all key agencies, to develop a juvenile action plan.

The development of strategies to reduce re-offending and enhance resettlement are welcome, as is the recognition by some agencies of the impact of custody on offenders’ children. However, offenders’ families do not yet play an integral part in resettlement plans. A multi-agency response from DfES and the Home Office would be necessary for this to take place.

There are some excellent examples of community projects that provide support to young parents on release although provision is very patchy.

**CHAPTER 8 SUMMARY - RELEASE AND RESETTLEMENT**

- Family support can contribute to reducing re-offending. Research has shown that parenting and relationship education in prison has limited impact if not integrated with support to families and if delivered in a vacuum without resettlement support. The most logical place for the development of family contact work would appear to be on the resettlement agenda.

- The National Action Plan (Home Office, 2004c) has a specific pathway on the needs of the children and families of offenders. It recommends enhancing support services in the community. However, it does not address the needs of imprisoned parents themselves or look at ways to provide integrated support.

- The Women’s Offending Reduction Programme (WORP) - (Home Office, 2004c) addresses the range of resettlement needs that women face. It aims to increase awareness of the impact of imprisonment on children and families. However, the Programme does not suggest involving families in resettlement plans.

- The YJB is piloting a resettlement model – PRISE. It has taken the lead in setting up a juvenile resettlement steering group. The concept of young people as parents has not been part of it’s resettlement remit.
Chapter Nine

Conclusion and Recommendations

CONCLUSION

The report has shown that there is considerable scope for Government departments and voluntary organisations to work more closely together to respond to the needs of young parents who offend and their families. Up to now, apart from isolated pockets of good practice, this sizeable group of young people has been largely ignored and neglected. Yet supporting young parents in the criminal justice system is essential in order to reduce re-offending, take the opportunity to break the cycle of crime, avoid the inter-generational effects associated with offender parents and reduce harm to innocent children.

Whilst we have identified excellent examples of good practice in maintaining family contact and supporting imprisoned parents, these initiatives by various prison establishments remain sporadic and varied and rarely have sustainable funding. Our research was also able to identify innovative work across the UK to support young parents at risk in the community as well as projects designed to help young parents on release. These too were patchy, lacked sustainable funding and any central direction or co-ordination. Young parents’ needs are still being failed by an unco-ordinated cross departmental approach and poor interface between the Home Office and DfES. A coherent, integrated approach is called for if the needs of these vulnerable young families are to be met.

Recently the needs of children of imprisoned parents and their families have been placed on both family and criminal justice policy agendas. Making a real difference to the lives of both imprisoned parents and their children does require a complex, cross-governmental response. Significant progress in this area is unlikely to be made until a designated government department is charged with overall responsibility for co-ordinating policy and practice for imprisoned young parents, their children and families of offenders. A national lead could pull together contributions of a number of statutory and voluntary organizations and their remit could also include wider family contact.

The young parents involved in this research expressed hopes and fears about release from prison. Most spoke of their wish to be good parents and to take care of their children. If they are to have any chance of success more work must be done. This should start with diversion from the criminal justice system, and preventative work wherever possible, through to support on release for those whose offending is so serious that there can be no alternative to custody.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Government

- Create a designated DfES division with responsibility for imprisoned parents, their children and families of offenders and family contact work generally. This would oversee policy and service provision and maintain close links with the Home Office and HM Treasury.
- Develop clear cross-system ties and accountability between the child welfare system and criminal justice system to ensure an integrated response to offenders and their families.
- Ensure that mainstream statutory and voluntary services for children and families understand the needs of children and families of offenders and ensure that criminal justice services for offenders understand child protection procedures and policy. Provide cross-sectoral training.
- Ensure that the Halliday recommendation that dependent children should be taken into consideration when sentencing those with primary care responsibilities is upheld.
- Develop and promote appropriate community penalties for young offender parents and women with childcare responsibilities.
- Ensure accreditation requirements for community programmes include and validate gender specific programmes.
- Improve mandatory requirements and standards for the Prison Service in respect of maintaining quality contact between prisoners and their families.
- Ensure the involvement of families is included in the preventing re-offending agenda and ensure offender managers, Prison Service staff and Yots receive adequate training in this area,
- Ensure that parental status is recorded by the Prison Service and used as a priority determinant in prisoner allocation and in all aspects of sentence planning and preparation for release.
- Ensure that systems of accountability for offenders placed long distances from home are in place and that all services are clear who is accountable during a custodial placement. (Social Services and other service providers should adopt the Connexions ‘Home’ and ‘locality’ model when offenders are placed long distances from home.)
- Create a framework and funding for guaranteeing the provision of essential information to families at each point in the criminal justice system.
- Provide core and sustainable funding for all family contact work; to include Visitor Centre funding, Family and Parenting Learning, appointment of Family Contact Development Officers and a range of specialist support services (Both prison & community based for children and families of offenders).
- Establish appropriate accommodation for juvenile girls.
- Develop a strategy for foreign national prisoners which includes their specific family contact needs.

Courts

- Ensure that somebody is accountable for providing information to families through the court process.
- The courts need to work with Government to make it a priority to reduce the use of custodial sentences for parents and to consider parental status in sentencing decisions. (As outlined in the Halliday report ‘Making Punishments Work’; The Child Poverty Review, 2004).
• An investigation of the scope for sentencing, to take account of primary care responsibilities, should be conducted by the Sentencing Advisory Panel, and guidance produced for the courts by the Sentencing Guidelines Council.

• The Judicial Studies Board should enhance its training to alert judges to the particular effects of imprisonment of mothers and fathers with primary care responsibilities.

**Prisons**

• Establish sensitive mechanisms for collecting, storing and sharing information about imprisoned parents and their children. (As outlined in the Child Poverty Review, HM Treasury, 2004).

• Where parents are kept in custody every effort should be made to place them closer to home.

• All prisons should have full time Family Contact Development Officers to co-ordinate family contact work, as is the practice in most Scottish prisons.

• Ensure practical needs of families can be met such as travel costs, transport and escort schemes for carers of children.

• Establish visitors’ centres in all prisons with the development of these as resource centres and access points to mainstream services for prisoners’ families. NOMS should utilise visitors’ centres as a bridge between prisons and the community, as part of providing a seamless service.

• The development of quality standards for visitors’ centres to define their purpose, and set minimum requirements.

• An appropriately resourced system of booking visits must be a priority for every prison. Minimum standards for booking visits are essential.

• Re-assess the quality of visits and introduce quality standards. (To include: child friendly environment, extended children’s visits, family days).

• Introduce staff training in family work, child development and child protection.

• Recognise imprisoned parents’ continuing responsibilities including provision for release on temporary licence, school reviews, compassionate visits for parents shortly after arrest to explain to children, additional phone access for parents responsible for the placement of children.

• Information should be sent out to families with visiting orders.

• Ensure pregnant women receive the same ante natal and healthcare as women in the community.

**Social Services**

• Ensure that thorough procedures and checks are made when placing children of imprisoned parents with carers. These should be equivalent to procedures for placing children in temporary or long term fostering. There should be continuous checks made on these placements and information provided to the imprisoned parent.

• Ensure that rights of children of imprisoned parents are protected and their rights to quality contact with both parents upheld.

• Implement plans to ensure that the Children Act (1989) is upheld in custodial settings and those young prisoners are provided with the same protection as children in the community (Munby judgement).
Family welfare and voluntary services for young parents and children and families:

- Develop knowledge on the needs of young parents and families in CJS and include staff training in this area.
- Develop more services that involve young people in their development and management such as the Connexions model.
- Develop guidelines for work with young offender parents and their families including how to reach them and provide appropriate support.

YJB, National Probation Service and NOMS:

- Consider the needs of young offender parents and implement plans to include support for offenders as parents as part of its parenting work.
- Ensure that pre-sentence reports provided to courts include all information on individual’s family circumstances and the likely impact of a custodial sentence on the family, particularly children.
- Pre-court preparation work should focus on childcare arrangements where a custodial sentence is likely.
- Provide information on prison to the families of offenders following a custodial sentence.
- Support imprisoned parents during their sentence and on release.

OLSU

- Parenting and family relationship courses should be offered in all adult and young offender institutions and form part of the core learning modules and preparation for resettlement.
- Data should be collected on the numbers and types of parenting courses running annually in all establishments, through Learning and Skills Councils.
- Establish a database of good practice in parenting and family contact work that can be utilized by all practitioners working with young parents who offend, through the Learning and Skills Development Agency.
- Establish evaluation systems for parenting and family learning modules.
- Priority funding should be given, through Heads of Learning and Skills in prisons to parenting programmes that address diversity issues, gender specific programmes for imprisoned mothers and programmes that include a broader range of topics that affect young people’s lives and their ability to parent.

Further Research should be conducted into:

- The needs of offenders’ families and their children.
- The specific needs of young parents in the CJS.
- How to make all services more accessible and acceptable to BME groups.
REFERENCES


• House of Commons Transcript of oral evidence to Home Affairs Select Committee on 25th May 2004.

• House of Commons: Hansard Written Answers – 28th April 2003 www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk

• House of Commons: Hansard Written Answers – 16th May 2003. www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk

• House of Commons: Hansard Written Answers - 8th July 2003. www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk
• House of Commons: Hansard Written Answers - 10th October 2003. www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk

• House of Commons: Hansard Written Answers - 21st October 2003. www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk

• House of Commons: Hansard Written Answers - 13th November 2003 www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk

• House of Commons: Hansard Written Answers - 17th November 2003 www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk

• House of Commons: Hansard Written Answers - 5th January 2004 www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk


• Letter to Annette Brooke MP from Prisons and Probation Minister Paul Goggins, 18th December 2003.


• Prison Population and Accommodation Briefing for 2nd July, HM Prison Service, Estate Planning and Management Group.

• Prison Population and Accommodation Briefing for 2nd July 2004 and Youth Justice Board Information.


Practical Resources and Guides

TEENAGERS AND YOUNG PEOPLE


PARENTS / YOUNG PARENTS

Leeds Animation Workshop. (2004). Good to be Home. (13 min animated video pack, looks at the problems faced by couples separated by imprisonment and some of the things that might help) www.leedsanimation.demon.co.uk

The Maternity Alliance. (2003). Resource Pack for professionals working with pregnant teenagers and young parents. (Gives all the latest up to date information regarding benefits and rights for young parents). www.maternityalliance.org.uk


FATHERS


Fathers Direct. Father Facts – How to Build New Dads from Here to Paternity: supporting mothers by supporting fathers. www.fathersdirect.com


GRANDPARENTS

Islington Council, Islington Social Services, Prisoners Families and Friends Service, Age Concern Islington. Written in partnership with Islington PCT. A Guide for grandparents bringing up the children of prisoners and Guide for young people who are living with their grandparents while their parents are in prison – as above, part of same booklet. For information paula.cooze@nhs.net

FAMILIES


Howard League for Penal Reform. Families Matter. www.howardleague.org

Nacro: www.nacro.org
• Forgotten Victims: How Prison Affects the Family
• Opening the Doors: Prisoners Families.
• Outside Help: Practical Information for the Families and Friends of People in Prison.


CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE WITH A PRISONER IN THE FAMILY

Action for Prisoners Families. www.actionpf.org.uk
• No-one’s ever asked me: Young People with a Prisoner in the Family (2001)
• Supporting young people affected by imprisonment. (2002). (Pack of a whole range of publications to assist those working with young people affected by imprisonment).
• I didn’t think anyone could understand Miss: Supporting prisoners’ children in school.

Howard League for Penal Reform. The Voice of the Child: the Impact on Children of their Mother’s Imprisonment. www.howardleague.org

Save the Children.
• A Code of Good Practice: Children and the Prison System.
• Working with Children of Prisoners: A Resource for Teachers.
• Prisoners Children: Research Policy and Practice. www.savethechildren.org.uk
VISITS, VISITORS’ CENTRES & SUPPORT GROUPS

Kids VIP:
• Setting Up a Prison Play Project
• Guidelines for Extended Children’s Visits in Male Prisons
• Guidelines for Extended Children’s Visits in Women’s Prisons

Ormiston Children and Families Trust:
• I’m Going to Visit My Dad in Prison: My Special Book
• I’m Going to Visit My Mum in Prison: My Special Book.

HM Prison Service: www.hmprisons.gov.uk
• Assisted Prison Visits Scheme.
• Visitors’ Centres Good Practice Guidelines
• Guide for Visitors To Prison.

Save the Children: www.savethechildren.org.uk
• Children Visiting Holloway Prison: Inside and Outside Perspectives on the All Day Visits
• Visits Scheme at HMP Holloway.
• Children Visiting Parents in Prison: guidelines for setting up extended visiting schemes.
• More than a box of toys.

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

Adfam. www.adfam.org.uk
• Are you worried about your mum dad or carer using Drugs or Alcohol?
• Living with a Drug User – For the Parents of Drug Users.
• Living with a Drug User – For the Partners of Drug Users.
• Parents Guide to Drugs: What you should know.
• Prison Drugs and You: a booklet for the family and friends of prisoners.

BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS:


UK HELPLINES

Action for Prisoners’ Families – 020 7384 1987

Aftermath (for families of very serious offenders) – 0114 275 8520

Assisted Prison Visits – 0845 300 1423

ChildLine/ChildLine Scotland – 0800 1111

Children’s Legal Centre – 020 7359 6251
Drink line – 0800 917 8282
Fathers Direct – 020 7920 9491
Get Connected – (finding young people the help they need) – 0808 808 4994
HARPLINE (Help and Advice for Relatives of Prisoners, East Anglia managed by the Ormiston Children and Families Trust) – 0800 389 3003
Health Helpline – 0800 665544
NACRO Resettlement Plus Helpline – 0800 0181 259
National Drugs Helpline – 0800 77 66 00
Ormiston Children and Families Trust – 01473 723517
Outmates (support for families, partners, friends of prisoners) – 020 8665 9562
Parentline Plus – 0808 800 2222
POPS (Partners of Prisoners families support group, North West and North Wales) – 0161 277 9066
PACT (Prison Advice and Care Trust) – 0800 085 3021
Prisoners’ Families and Friends – 0808 808 3444
Prisoners’ Families Helpline – 0808 808 2003
PFFS (Prisoners’ Friends and Families Service) – 0808 808 3444
Prison Link (for families of Black and Asian Prisoners) – 0121 551 1207 or emergency helpline 0121 523 0695
Prison Reform Trust – 020 7251 5070
Prison Watch (support/advice for prisoners and families, especially those at risk, assists in cases of self harm, suicide and death in custody) – 01332 756 158
Release (drugs and legal advice) – 020 7729 9904
The Samaritans – 08457 909 090
Scottish Prisoners’ Families Helpline – 0500 83 93 83
SEXWISE – 0800 282930
Young Minds – (free service for people worried about the emotional well being of their child) – 0800 0182138
National Organisations

CRIMINAL JUSTICE SECTOR SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS

Action for Prisoners Families, Unit 102 Riverbank House, 1 Putney Bridge Approach, London SW6 3JD, Tel: 020 7384 1987, www.prisonersfamilies.org.uk

Aftermath (nationwide support and counselling for families of those accused of serious offences), PO Box 414, Sheffield S4 7RT, Tel: 0114 275 8520, callaftermath@hotmail.com

Assisted Prison Visits Unit (APVU), PO Box 2152, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 1SD, Helpline 0845 300 1423

BARS (support group for prisoners' wives), C/O Woodhill Visitors Centre, Tattenhoe St, Milton Keynes, Bucks MK4 4DA, Tel: 01908 501999

The Children's Legal Centre, University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester CO4 3SQ, Tel: 01206 872466

Crime Concern, Beaver House, 147-150 Victoria Road, Swindon, Wiltshire SN1 3UY, Tel: 01793 863 500

Families Outside, 19a Albany St, Edinburgh EH1 3QN, Tel: 0131 557 9800, www.familiesoutside.org.uk

Help and Advice for Lone Offenders’ Wives (HALOW), PO Box 7081, Birmingham B18 4AN, Tel: 0121 5519799, www.young-voice.org

Hibiscus (support for women Foreign National prisoners), 18 Borough High Street, London SE1 9QQ, Tel: 020 7357 6543

Howard League for Penal Reform, 1 Ardleigh Road, London N1 4HS, Tel: 020 7249 7373, howardleague@ukonline.co.uk

National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO), 169 Clapham Road, London SW9 0PU, Tel: 020 7582 6500, www.nacro.org.uk

National Association of Prison Visitors, 32 Newnham Avenue, Bedford MK41 9PT, Tel: 01243 359763

The New Bridge – family matters courses for prisoners, resettlement support and befriending, 27A Medway St, London SW1 2BD, Tel: 020 7976 0779
The New Bridge Volunteer Centre, Clarence Terrace, Chester-le-Street, Durham DH3 3DQ, Tel: 0191 388 6069

Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO), 169 Ormeau Road, Belfast BT7 1SQ, Tel: 028 9032 0157, www.niacro.org

Partners of Prisoners Families Support Group (POPS), 1079 Rochdale Road, Blackley, Manchester M9 8AJ, Tel: 0161 702 1000, www.partnersofprisoners.co.uk

Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT), Family Support Services, 1-3 Brixton Road, London SW9 6DE, Tel: 020 7582 1313, www.imprisonment.org.uk
Prisoners’ Families and Friends, 20 Trinity Street, London SE1 1DB, Tel: 020 7403 4091

Prison Fellowship England and Wales, PO Box 945, Maldon, Essex CM9 4EW, Tel: 0161 843232, www.prisonfellowship@dial.pipex.com

Prison Fellowship (Scotland), 110 St James Road, Glasgow G4 0PS, Tel: 0141 552 1288

Prison Link, 29 Trinity Rd, Aston, Birmingham BA6 6AJ, Tel: 0121 551 1207

Prison Link (Northern Ireland), 40-44 Great Patrick Street, Belfast BT1 2LT, Tel: 028 9026 2492

Prison Reform Trust, 15 Northburgh St, London EC1V OJR, Tel: 020 7251 5070, www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk

Prisoners’ Wives and Family Society, 254 Caledonian Road, London N1 0NG, Tel: 020 7278 3981

SACRO, Safeguarding Communities - Reducing Offending, 1 Broughton Market, Edinburgh EH3 6NU, Tel: 0131 624 7270, www.sacro.org.uk

Serious Offenders Families Association (SOFA), 2 The Chestnut, Ellis St, Hull HU5 3AR, Tel: 01482 442133

Women in Prison, 3B Aberdeen Studios, 22 Highbury Grove, London N5 2EA, Tel: 020 7226 5879 www.womeninprison.org.uk

PARENTING ORGANISATIONS

The ADD-ADHD Family Support Group UK, 1a High St, Dilton Marsh Westbury, Wiltshire BA13 4DL, Tel: 01373 826045/01380 726710

Barnardos, Tanners Lane, Barkingside, Ilford, Essex IG6 7QJ, Tel: 020 8550 8822

British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF), Skyline House, 200 Union Street, London SE1 0LX, Tel: 020 7593 2000

Care for the Family, PO Box 488, Cardiff CF15 7YY, Tel: 029 2081 0800, www.care-for-the-family.org.uk

Centre for Fun and Families, 25, Shanklin Drive, Leicester LE2 3RH, Tel: 0116 270 7198

Chance (UK), Unit S1 & S2, 89-93 Fonthill Road, Finsbury Park, London N4 3JH, Tel: 020 7281 5858

Children and Young Persons Unit, DIES, Caxton House, 6-12 Tothill St, London SW1H 9NA

Children in Scotland, Princes House, 5 Shandwick Place, Edinburgh EH2 4RG, Tel: 0131 228 8484

Children in Wales, 25 Windsor Place, Cardiff CF10 3BZ, Tel: 029 20 342434

Children’s Society, Edward Rudolf House, Margery Street, London WC1X OJL, Admin: 020 7841 4400, Enquiries: 020 7841 4436

Contact a Family, Bringing together families whose children have disabilities. 209-211, City Rd., London EC1V 1JN, Tel: 020 7608 8700
Coram Family, 49, Mecklenburgh Sq., London WC1N 2QA, Tel: 020 7520 0300

Day Care Trust, 21, St. George's Rd., London SE1 6ES, Tel: 020 7840 3350

Disabled Parents Network, Unit F9, 89-93 Fonthill Rd., London N4 3JH, Tel: 08702 410450


Family Caring Trust, 8 Ashtree Enterprise Park, Newry, Co. Down BT34 1BY, Tel: 028 3026 4174

Family and Youth Concern, 322 Woodstock Road, Oxford OX2 7NS, Tel: 01865 351966

Family Nurturing Network, Unit 12F, Minns Estate, 7 Westway, Botley Rd, Oxford OX2 OJD, Tel: 01865 722442

Family Planning Association, 2-12 Pentonville Rd, London N1 9FP, Tel: 020 7837 5432

Family Rights Group, The Print House, 18 Ashwin St, London E8 3DL, Tel: 020 7923 2628

Family Service Units, 207 Old Marylebone Road, London NW1 5QP, Tel: 020 7402 5175

Family Welfare Association, Family and Community Care, 501-505 Kingsland Rd, London E8 4AU, Tel: 020 7254 6251

Fathers Direct, Herald House, Lambs Passage, Bunhill Row, London EC1Y 8TQ, Tel: 020 7920 9491 or 0845 634 1328, www.fathersdirect.com

Gingerbread, 16-17 Clerkenwell Close, London, EC1R OAA, Tel: 020 7336 8183

Home Start UK, 2 Salisbury Rd, Leicester LE1 7QR

Include, 2nd floor, 8 High Street, Ely, Cambs CB7 4JY, Tel: 01353 6590 210

Kids Club Network, Bellerive House, 3 Muirfield Crescent London E14 9SZ, Tel: 020 7512 2112

Kids VIP, 3 Elizabeth House, Reedworth Street, London SE11 4NN

Maternity Alliance, Unit 3.3, 2-6 Northburgh St, London EC1V OAY, Tel: 020 7490 7639, www.maternityalliance.org.uk

Mellow Parenting, Maggie Mills 2 Meard St, London W1V 3HR; Christine Puckering, Wester, Craigend, Polmaise Road, Stirling; John Rogers, 43 Braemar Ave, Dunblane, Perthshire

National Association of Child Contact Centres (NACCC), Minerva House, Spaniel Row, Nottingham NG1 6EP, Tel: 01159 484557, www.naccc.org.uk

National Children’s Bureau, 8 Wakley St, London, EC1V 7QE, Tel: 020 7843 6000

National Confederation of Parent/Teacher Associations (NCPTA), 2 Ebbsfleet Estate, Stonebridge Rd, Gravesend, Kent DA11 9DZ, Tel: 01474 560618

National Council for One Parent Families, 255 Kentish Town Rd, London NW5 2LX, Tel: 020 7428 5400
**National Family Mediation**, 9 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9SN, Helpline: 020 7383 5993

**National Family and Parenting Institute**, 430 Highgate Studios, 53-79 Highgate Road, London NW5 1TL, Tel: 020 7424 3460

**National Foster Care Association**, 87 Blackfriar Road, London SE1 8HA, Tel: 0207 383 5993

**National Newpin (New Parent Information Network)**, Sutherland House, 35 Sutherland Square, Walworth, London SE17 3EE, Tel: 020 7703 6326

**NCH Action for Children**, 85 Highbury Park, London, N5 1UD, Tel: 020 7226 2033

**NCH Action for Children Midlands**, Princess Alice Drive, Chester Rd North, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands B73 6RD, Tel: 0121 355 4615

**NCH Action for Children (Scotland)**, (Includes Dundee Family Support Project) 17 Newton Place, Glasgow G3 7PY, Tel: 0141 332 4041

**New Learning Centre** – Helps parents cope with ADD, Dyslexia – 211 Sumatra Rd, London NW6 1FF

**NSPCC**, 42 Curtain Road, London EC2A 3NH, Tel: 020 7825 2500, Helpline: 0808 800 5000 (24 hours)

**One Parent Families (Scotland)**, 13 Gayfield Square, Edinburgh EH1 3NX, Tel: 0131 556 3889, Helpline 0800 018 5026, info@opfs.org.uk

**One Plus One**, The Wells, 7-15 Roseberry Ave., London EC1R 4SP, Tel: 020 7841 3660

**Ormiston Children and Families Trust**, 333 Felixstowe Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP3 9BU, Tel: 01473 724 517

**Parent Education and Development Team**, Cricket Road Centre, Cricket Road, Oxford OX4 3DU, Tel: 01865 428 078

**Parent Education and Support Forum**, Unit 731 Highgate Studios, 53-79 Highgate, Kentish Town, London NW5 1TL, Tel: 020 7284 8380

**Parenting Connections Consultancy**, 14 Somali Rd, London NW2 3RL, Tel: 020 7813 9190

**Parentline Plus**, Unit 520 Highgate Studios, 53-79 Highgate Road, Kentish Town, London NW5 1TL, Tel: 020 7284 5536, Helpline 0808 800 2222, www.parentlineplus.org.uk

**Positive Parenting**, publications and training, First Floor, 2a South St, Gosport PO12 1ES, Tel: 02392 528787, info@parenting.org.uk

**Pre-School Learning Alliance**, 61-63 Kings Cross Rd, London WC1X 9LL, Tel: 020 7833 0991

**Promoting Effective Parenting**, 2 River Street, Truro, Cornwall TR1 2RP, Tel: 01872 262 067

**Rathbone CI**, Help and support to parents of children with special educational needs, 1st Floor, Excalibur Building, 77 Whitworth St, Manchester M1 6EZ, Tel: 0161 236 5358

**Save the Children Fund**, 17 Grove Lane, London SE5 8RD, Tel: 020 7703 5400
Scottish Parenting Forum, Princes House, 5 Shandwick Place, Edinburgh EH2 4RG, Tel: 0131 228 8484

Trust for the Study of Adolescence, 23 New Rd, Brighton BA1 1WZ, Tel: 01273 693311

West Leeds Family Service Unit, 3 Chiswick St, Leeds LS6 1QE, Tel: 0113 275 7600

YMCA – Parenting and Education Support, Dee Bridge House 25-27 Lower Bridge St, Chester CH1 1RS, Tel: 01244 403090

Young Minds, 102-108 Clerkenwell Rd, London EC1M 5SA, Tel: 020 7336 8445

OTHER SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS

ADFAM (national charity for drug users), Waterbridge House, 32-36 Loman St, London SE1 OEH, Tel: 020 7928 8898, www.adfam.org.uk

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Jacob House, 3-5 Cynthia Street, London N1 9JE, Tel: 0845 769 7555, www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

Black Men’s Forum, Chapeltown Enterprise Centre, 231 Chapeltown Road, Leeds LS7 3DX, Tel: 0113 262 6333

British Institute of Learning Disabilities, Campion House, Green St., Kidderminster, Worcestershire DY10 1JL, Tel: 01562 723010

The Equal Opportunities Commission, Overseas House, Quay St, Manchester, M3 3HN, Tel: 0161 833 9244

The National Association for Special Educational Needs, NASEN House, 4/5 Amber Business Village, Amber Close, Tamworth B77 4RP, Tel: 01827 313005

N.C.V.C.C.O., Unit 4, Pride Court, 80-82 White Lion St, London, N1 9PF, Tel: 020 7833 3319, office@voluntarychild.org

Race Equality Unit, Unit 35 Kings Exchange, Tileyard Rd, London N7 9AH, Tel: 020 7619 6220, www.reu.org.uk

Relate, Herbert Gray College, Little Church Street, Rugby, Warwickshire CV21 3AP, Tel: 01788 57324, 0845 456 1310 or Relateline 0845 130 4010

Working With Men, 320 Commercial Way, London SE15 1QN, Tel: 020 7732 9409

YMCA, 3-9 Southampton Row, London WC1B 5HA, Tel: 020 7421 3001

Young Voice, 25a Creek Road, East Molesey, Surrey KT8 9BE, Tel: 020 8979 4991, www.young-voice.org

YWCA, Clarendon House, 52 Cornmarket Street, Oxford OX1 3EJ, Tel: 01865 304 200, info@ywca.org.uk
Appendix One

Custodial Provision and Accountability

Under 18s
The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales is a non-departmental public body responsible for all placements in secure accommodation of both males and females under 18 and for setting standards in those facilities. Its aim is to prevent offending by children and young people. The system is made up of Youth Offending Teams, Youth Courts, the Police and the institutions in which young people are held in custody. There is a Yot in every Local Authority in England and Wales which identifies the needs of each young offender. There are three types of secure accommodation in which a young person can be placed:

Secure Training Centres (STCs)
These are purpose-built centres for young offenders up to age 17. They are run by private sector operators in accordance with Home Office contracts. They differ from Young Offender Institutions in that they have a higher staff ratio, and are smaller in size. There are currently only three Secure Training Centres in England.

Local Authority Secure Children’s Homes (LASCH)
Local Authority Secure Children’s Homes are small facilities ranging from 5-30 beds, with a high staff ratio. They are generally used to accommodate young people aged 12-14, girls up to the age of 16 and 15-16 year old boys who are assessed and perceived as vulnerable. In 2004, the YJB announced it is set to cut by almost 40 per cent the number of places it uses in these homes. Instead the Board wants to increase the number of places in privately run STCs. Costs are greater in secure homes than STCs as they require a higher ratio of staff to comply with the Children Act 1989 and are subject to checks by the Social Services Inspectorate.

Young Offender Institutions (YOIs)
Young Offender Institutions (YOIs) are facilities run by the Prison Service. They accommodate 15-21 year olds. The YJB is only responsible for commissioning places for those under 18.

Girls under 18
Girls under 18 can be placed in an adult women’s prison, despite continuous campaigning by children’s charities and criminal justice agencies to make this illegal. The Government pledged four years ago that 15 and 16 year old girls would be removed from adult custody.

‘On 8th March 1999 the then Home Secretary – Jack Straw announced that from April 2000 ‘15 and 16 year old girls would be placed in local authority care, not in prison. In the longer term sentenced young women aged 17 will also not be placed in Prison Service custody’ (Howard League for Penal Reform, 2004b). The target of removing all 15-16 year olds has been met. Since 2000, the YJB has held responsibility for the placement of girls in custody and pledged ‘it is an absolute priority to place all young women outside adult prisons in more suitable accommodation.’
On 18th February 2002 the Youth Justice Board announced its intention to remove all under 17 year old girls from Prison Service accommodation by 2003. By December 2003 it was no longer placing 15 year old girls in prison. There has also been a significant reduction in the number of 16 year old girls in prison. However, despite repeated promises to remove girls from prison, 17-year-old girls continue to be routinely placed there. At end of 2003, 91 juvenile girls were still in Prison Service custody. A recent report by the Howard League for Penal Reform (2004e) looking at girls in prison, found that because few prisons hold girls, many are a long way from home. This puts a strain on relationships, and many families find it difficult to visit. The distance from home also creates difficulties for Yots, few Yot officers visited girls apart from to attend review meetings.

In April 2004, (Home Office, 2004e) the Home Secretary announced that the YJB had been allocated £16 million of new money to set up specialist units for young women. A failure to obtain relevant planning permissions or to attract voluntary or private contractors prepared to bid to run these units appears to have led to a decision to locate them within the perimeter fences of existing women's prisons. The new money means that juveniles currently held in women's prisons can be moved to these discrete units by the beginning of 2006. This is in addition to the £3.5m already set aside for a new unit at HMP Downview. The Home Office promised to ensure that girls are moved from HMP Holloway within the next twelve months. The new units will ensure that they are held separately with their own facilities. Staff will be specifically trained to look after young prisoners (Home Office, March 2004e.)

The new Women’s Reducing Re-offending Programme (WORP), Home Office, 2004b pledges to ensure the removal of all seventeen-year-old girls from adult custody. Speaking at the PRT conference on young mothers in May 2004, Joyce Mosely, Board member for the Youth Justice Board stated that;

‘As part of these new facilities it is anticipated that provision will be made of between four and ten places for young mothers. These will be an extension to either an STC or LASCH accommodation drawing on resources from the main unit e.g. education and pregnant girls will be placed in same unit. There will be flexibility over the age of the baby with 18 months as a guideline upper age limit’ (Moseley, 2004).

Whilst it is commendable that young mothers are being removed from adult secure accommodation this move could lead to the increased use of imprisonment for young mothers under eighteen if the Prison Service can provide specialist custodial accommodation for this group.

In November 2002, the Howard League for Penal Reform (2002d) won a judicial review against the Home Secretary arguing that the Children Act (1989) should apply to children in prison. The ruling imposed upon the Government a duty to ensure the protection and standards of the Children Act are applied to people in prison (Munby Judgement). This should have resulted in more child protection investigation in prison and greater involvement of Social Services in assessing and helping to meet needs. There has not as yet been any significant implementation of this ruling, although plans are in place to appoint a child protection officer for every YOI holding under 18 year olds.

**Young men 18-21**

Young men aged 18-21 are being placed in Young Offender Institutions or youth wings of adult male prisons. The Prison Service is responsible for their placement. Young men aged 18-21 are also more likely to be serving very short sentences, so little appears to be being done in terms of rehabilitation and education programmes. It has been repeatedly acknowledged that these young men form a neglected and marginalized group. As part of his Labour Party Manifesto ahead of the last election, the Prime Minister gave this commitment: ‘We will build on our Youth Justice reforms
to improve the standard of custodial accommodation and offending behaviour programmes for 18-20 year old offenders.’ (Labour Party 2000). In ‘A Lost Generation,’ the Prison Reform Trust has documented the social and economic costs of this broken promise. (Prison Reform Trust 2004j).

**Young women 18-21**

Women over eighteen will be placed in the adult female prison estate but will be held on special YOI wings within the prison. There are currently nineteen female prisons. In 2004, the Prison Service re-rolled four prisons from men’s to women’s prisons, due to the significant rise in the adult female population. The re-roling of male prisons to female ones has raised concerns about the women being placed in accommodation and regimes designed for men. The first privately-run women’s prison - HMP Bronzefield in Ashford - opened in June 2004.

**Women over 18 and babies**

Women with babies are entitled to apply for a place in a Mother and Baby Unit and each case will be judged on individual merit. Women are legally entitled to keep their babies with them until they reach eighteen months. In practice, where women are serving long sentences, many staff working with this group would recommend separation at an earlier date such as six months. There are currently eighty places in mother and baby units reserved for those with babies under eighteen months. A further twenty-two places were due to be provided by the end of the year (PRT, 2004d).

In August 2004, a women’s jail in Scotland – HMP YOI Cornton Vale – announced plans for mothers to keep their children up to the age of five. The move will see mothers living with their children in independent houses on the edge of the prison grounds. The initiative has attracted strong criticism from children’s charities which see prison as an unsuitable environment for a child. However, the Scottish Prison Service feels it is preferable to separation (BBC News, 2004).
Appendix Two

A List of Community Penalties

HOW COMMUNITY PENALTIES WORK

If an offender is found guilty of an offence, he or she can be, or discharged, cautioned, fined, given a community sentence or sentenced to custody. The type of sentence is ultimately the decision of magistrates and judges, but the courts take into account pre-sentence reports compiled by a probation officer, or a youth offending team member in the case of 10-17 year olds.

ADULTS

Community sentences for adults are supervised by the National Probation Service, which is divided into 42 local areas in England and Wales.

**Community Rehabilitation Orders (previously known as Probation Orders)**
Offenders are placed under the supervision of a probation officer for a period of six months to three years. A CRO involves regular meetings and participation in programmes, which aim to change the way offenders behave and think. Courts can also lay down additional conditions as part of the Order such as having to live in a probation hostel.

**Community Punishment Orders (previously known as Community Service)**
Offenders have to do unpaid work that benefits the local community. The offenders are supervised by specially trained probation staff or work providers. A CPO is suitable for people aged 16 and over. It can last anything from 40 to 240 hours for between five and 21 hours a week. It must be completed within 12 months. Since October 2003 CPOs have been delivered as Enhanced Community Punishments and combine compulsory work with job training and offending behaviour programmes.

**Community Punishment and Rehabilitation Order**
CPROs combine between one and three years of probation supervision with 40-100 hours of unpaid work benefiting the local community. Since October 2003, the work element has also been combined with job training under the new Enhanced Community Punishment Scheme.

**Drug Treatment and Testing Order**
Offenders must attend regular treatment sessions for drug addiction and be regularly tested for illegal substances. They are assessed by their probation officer and given individual treatment/supervision plans. They are also given help with basic skills, employment and training, and housing advice. Their progress is monitored regularly by a magistrate.

**Offending Behaviour Programmes**
Offenders sentenced to CROs or CPROs may be required to participate in offending behaviour programmes. These programmes involve one-to-one or group work sessions designed to tackle drink driving, racially motivated offending, anger management, domestic violence and substance misuse.
**Intensive Control and Change Programme (ICCP)**

This programme combines rehabilitation with close supervision and will be delivered through a CPRO. It is targeted at 18–20 year-olds who would otherwise receive a 12-month prison sentence. Offenders have 25 hours of intensive supervision for the first three months of the programme, followed by 12 hours a week for the next three months. Programmes include attending an offending behaviour programme (see above), a Community Punishment Order of up to 100 hours, a Curfew Order, mentoring and education training and employment advice. A pilot started in April 2003 in six areas and the programme is now being rolled out across the country.

*For more information see the National Probation Service website: www.probation.homeoffice.gov.uk*

**YOUNG OFFENDERS**

Community sentences for young offenders are normally supervised by a Youth Offending Team. Yots are made up of representatives from the police, probation, social services, health, education, drugs and alcohol misuse and housing officers. They are answerable to the Youth Justice Board, a public body which is responsible for the youth justice system.

Young offenders aged 16–17 can also be sentenced to the same Orders as adult offenders with the exception of Home Detention Curfews which are only for prisoners aged 18 and over and ICCPs which are for 18-20 year olds.

**Action Plan Order**

An Action Plan Order is an intensive, community-based programme lasting three months. The order is supervised and developed by the Yot. The programme is specifically tailored to the risks and needs of the young person. It can include repairing the harm done to the victim of the offence or the community, education and training, attending an attendance centre or a variety of other programmes to address a young person’s offending behaviour.

**Reparation Order**

Reparation Orders help young offenders to understand the consequences of their offending and to take responsibility for their behaviour. The young person must repair the harm caused by their offence either directly to the victim (this can involve victim/offender mediation if both parties agree) or indirectly to the community. Examples of this might be cleaning up graffiti or undertaking community work. The order is overseen by the Yot.

**Referral Order**

All young people who plead guilty to a first offence in court must receive a Referral Order, unless they are given an absolute discharge, or the offence is so serious that a custodial sentence is required. Once a Referral Order is made, the young person is required to attend a Youth Offender Panel, which is made up of a Yot officer and two volunteers from the local community. The Panel - the young person, their parents/carers and the victim (where appropriate) - agree a contract lasting between three and 12 months. The contract can include attending programmes to address offending behaviour, repairing the harm done by their offence, or a variety of other actions. The conviction is spent once the contract has been completed.
Supervision Order
A Supervision Order can last up to three years. A range of conditions can be attached to a Supervision Order when the sentence is used for more serious offences. These are called ‘specified activities’ and can last for up to 90 days. Examples of ‘specified activities’ might be participation in an Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Project (ISSP), drug treatment (for young people aged 16+), curfews, or residence requirements, which might require a young person to live in local authority accommodation for the period of the sentence.
A young person receiving a Supervision Order is also required to take part in activities set by the Youth Offending Team which could include repairing the harm done by their offence either to the victim or the community, and programmes to address their offending behaviour such as anger management.

Parenting Order
Parenting Orders can be given to the parents/carers of young people who offend, truant or who have received a Child Safety Order (CSO), Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) or Sex Offender Order (SOO). It lasts for three months, but can be extended to 12. It does not result in the parent/carer getting a criminal record.
A parent/carer who receives a Parenting Order will be required to attend counselling or guidance sessions. They may also have conditions imposed on them such as attending their child’s school, ensuring their child does not visit a particular place unsupervised or ensuring their child is at home at particular times. A failure to fulfil the conditions can be treated as a criminal offence and the parent/carer can be prosecuted.

Attendance Centre Order
This means a young person must regularly go to an Attendance Centre. These are normally run by the police. The regime typically involves discipline, physical training and social skills. The order can last up to 36 hours depending on the age of the offender and the seriousness of the offence.

Curfew Order
This sentence requires a young person to remain for set periods of time at a specified place. That period can be between two and 12 hours a day and the sentence can last no more than six months for those 16 years of age and above or three months for those under 16 years of age. (see tagging below)

Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme
ISSP is the most rigorous non-custodial intervention available for young offenders. It combines high levels of community-based surveillance whilst tackling the factors that contribute to the young person’s offending behaviour, through education, training, and offender behaviour programmes. ISSP targets the most active repeat young offenders, and those who commit the most serious crimes. By the end of 2003, ISSPs will cover all of the Youth Offending Team areas in England and Wales.

For more information visit the Youth Justice Board website:
www.youth-justice-board.gov.uk

Electronic Monitoring (Tagging)
Tagging is a way of keeping track of offenders in the community. Offenders are compelled to be in their homes at certain times each day - usually between early evening and early morning. An electronic device is attached to the offender’s wrist or ankle and this tag is linked to a monitoring machine in the offender’s home. The machine is linked via a telephone line to a monitoring centre. Staff at the monitoring centre can immediately tell if the curfew is broken and can return the offender to court. Tagging can be used as a sentence in its own right (see below) or as part of an ICCP or ISSP. Tagging orders are not monitored by probation, but by private security companies.
**Curfew Order**
Curfew Orders require offenders to be at a specified place (usually at home) at a specified time. The maximum length for an adult is six months and three months for 10-15 year olds.

**Home Detention Curfew (HDC)**
Under this scheme eligible prisoners are released early - anything from 60 days to 135 days before the end of their release date, depending on the length of their original sentence. Prisoners who are required to register on the Sex Offenders Register, fine defaulters, those awaiting deportation, and those breached for failing to comply with an electronically monitored curfew order, or who have already breached an HDC, are not eligible for this scheme.
In a survey commissioned by PRT and carried out by Natasha Thomas at the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies at Kings College, London, probation area teams were asked how and if they worked with young offender parents by means of a questionnaire and panel interviews.

**RESULTS OF THE SURVEY**

**i. Assessing and Recording**

When asked whether a probation area would normally expect offenders to be asked if they have children, how that data is recorded and in what situations, ten out of a possible thirteen respondents did ask as *part of their screening for risk of harm (OASys Section 2.1)*. A total of nine used case files to record such data, three said that they used the ‘summary report method’, and five had access to statistical databases.

Eight respondents said that offenders are asked about children *if the offender has a sexual partner (OASys Section 6)*. While data is sometimes recorded on case files, in only two cases is data recorded in summary reports and in only three cases on statistical databases.

Nine areas said that the information is recorded that offenders have children *when interviewing the offender in connection with any violent or sexual offence* and said that this information is held in case files. Six respondents stated that the data is held on statistical databases but only four held that data in summary reports.

Where offenders were asked in all circumstances whether they had children, eight said that records of findings are held in case files (seven cases), summary reports (three cases) and statistical databases (five cases).

These responses show that there is no routine method for recording or asking offenders about whether they have children, and that where that information is sought, it is most likely to be as part of screening for self-harm or if they are interviewed in connection with a sexual or violent offence, rather than as part of resettlement or support.

When asked how many young offenders (under 25) a probation area currently work with the numbers ranged hugely from 596 to 16,446. However, when asked how many of those were parents, many areas did not know.

A respondent from Essex probation area said that: “approximately 111 live with children,” and West Yorkshire responded that: “We have no way of knowing how many are parents from the system we use.” Other responses varied from “We have no way of knowing how many are parents from the system” to “Currently working with programme providers to ensure SPA can pull out specific pieces of information.”
In response to the question ‘which assessment forms, such as OASys, does your organisation routinely use with young parents?’, 11 probation areas said they use OASys, whilst two used E-OASys. However, Leicestershire and Rutland, Teeside and Thames Valley are the only three probation areas which routinely record the number of children offenders had, their ages, gender and the address they reside at.

**ii Staff Responsibility**

There were no positive responses recorded to the question ‘Is there a senior staff member whose responsibilities include leading on multi-agency work with parents? None of the probation areas had a dedicated senior member of staff who was responsible for taking the lead on multi-agency work with parents. However, the following comments were received:

- ‘ACO responsibility for working with ACPC and child protection issues, but not necessarily from the perspective of parents.’ (Leicestershire and Rutland)
- ‘Only for high risk cases. One of the ACO has responsibility for child protection, YOs and public protection, not specific responsibility for working with parents.’ (Suffolk)

**iii Support to Parents**

When asked whether a probation area offered any specific support to parents such as: home visit when prisoner is released on licence; probation volunteer support; crèches (e.g. for programme attendance), eight said they provided home visits to prisoners released on licence, three provided crèche facilities, and one offered probation volunteer support. In response to the question ‘do you offer any other support?’ the following statements were recorded:

- ‘Offenders are a priority but very often support is given to parents who are either subject to licence or whose children are.’
- ‘Child care will be paid for in some specific circumstances such as attendance at a group work programme. If no one else to care for the child.’
- ‘Arrange appointments to suit childcare.’
- ‘Help with childcare arrangements for those attending programme.’
- ‘Home visit done pre release for parole assessment report. Volunteer support has been in place but will not be available from 1.4.04.’
- ‘Community punishments pay for qualified/approved childminders whilst parents attend CP’

Out of the thirteen local probation areas, one respondent said they could provide evidence to support the fact that they do provide a wide range of support services. Another stated that evidence is *All held in individual files, not routinely collated.*

**iv Referrals to Other Statutory or Voluntary Organisations for Advice, Information or Support**

Eleven probation areas said they referred young parents to other agencies for advice and support. When asked to specify to which agencies young parents were referred Sure Start, health care professionals, voluntary sector services and social services were all mentioned.

**v Staff Resources**

A total of four probation areas have developed resources designed to help staff working with offender parents such as: lists of contact organisations; briefings on needs of families; guidance on sensitive issues such as access and contact with children; diversity issues such as ethnicity, religion, gay and lesbian parents.
Nine of the probation areas surveyed were aware of information channels available to staff which could help them to find out about provision of resources such as: internal database; specialist staff; external information source; multi-agency information source or the National EASy database. In addition, staff gained knowledge from internet access in each office, information and adverts sent into the office, NAPO directory, and young offender parenting classes.

vi Training Courses for Staff
Out of all the probation areas surveyed only two offered staff training courses looking at how to work with offender parents and their children.

vii Service Agreements
In response to the question ‘do you have any service agreements with parenting organisations - whether local or national - e.g. Parentline Plus, Parent Education and Support Forum, Family Caring Trust etc. there were no service agreements recorded across any of the local probation areas.

viii Working more Effectively with Offender Parents
When asked what the needs of their organisation were in order to work effectively with the offender parents, the following comments were recorded:

- ‘Understanding of parenting tasks to prevent children offending, greater working with existing services such as Sure Start, parenting programmes etc. Developing accredited parenting programmes.’
- ‘Improved childcare and transport to and from prison establishments.’
- ‘To identify offenders who are parents systematically. To identify what the needs of young parents (who are offenders) are.’
- ‘Information on support services.’
- ‘Ability to fully access the specific needs of the offender parents.’
- ‘More resources needed to make this possible and suitable places needed. Sometimes available from prisoners wives, not always.’
- ‘Routinely collect information on offenders with children.’
- ‘Collect information from relevant offenders.’

Out of 13 areas which responded to the question ‘would your organisation be interested in receiving further information about working with young parents?’ only one said that they would not like any further information on working with young parents. The remaining 12 said that they would.

ix Summary Findings:
The responses of probation areas revealed that there is no routine method for recording or collecting data on offender’s children and those that do record this information rarely ask for further details such as gender, age of child, or residence. There were no senior staff members whose responsibilities included multi-agency work with parents. Most respondents were aware of the channels of support available, but there was no database of service provision, and none of the organisations had any service contracts with national or local organisations. The main types of support probation services would provide for offender parents were childcare facilities or home visits following release.
PANEL INTERVIEWS

To gain further understanding and knowledge of probation work with young offenders, panel interviews took place with selected senior staff working within probation teams or partner agencies. They were asked in particular about gathering data on parents and their views on existing services for young parents.

Panel participants included a cross-section of people from prison, probation, parenting projects, Yots, National Probation Directorate, and a field probation officer working in resettlement.

a. recording information on offender parents

When asked whether information should be recorded on offender parents, the panel felt the following should be looked at and considered:

- What are the key facts? Why collect them? Are those staff collecting information doing preventative work with children? It is difficult to consider both the needs of the children and how to help offenders to be parents.
- There is a broader question about the family and about perceptions of it. For example: a child's address can be different from the offender’s. Sometimes children live with partners at other addresses or are cared for by in-laws. Parental responsibility can be perceived by the offender or not perceived.
- An offender may see him/herself as having a parental responsibility of some kind to a child that is not biologically related but might be the child of a partner.
- Children's names are the basis for Social Services records but these records may not link to the adults living with them.

b. How should the basic facts (ages, gender, and addresses) about the families of people on probation be recorded?

- There are two issues: practicality and confidentiality of data. The main practical way of collecting basic information is OASys. However, the facts about the family will only be recorded if there are child protection issues. Adding extra expectations to OASys would depend on a complex mechanism that controls its content and design.
- There are civil rights issues about linking family information to offending. The rationale for OASys is reduction of offending so it would be necessary to consider the arguments for recording family details on it.
- Most offenders are not going to disclose the fact that they're parents because they're not asked as a matter of course - unless the question is asked, the information is not going to be collated.
- Holloway Prison launched a First Night in Custody project for when women are received into the prison. All prisoners go through induction but what the prisoner and the staff get out of it varies hugely. If prisoners are seen individually, as they are on this scheme, problems such as 'Who’s looking after the baby?' would be addressed, and information about someone's parenting circumstances recorded. OASys asks about families, risk and drugs.
- Several panel members said that some women don't like being asked the question 'have you got children?' and that it is like when a person dies; no-one ever comes up and says to you, how are you, how's it going for you since so-and-so died? It's embarrassing, it's awkward. If you don't ask the question then you're not going to give people the power.
- It is important to consider who asks the questions and whose responses - the offender or the carer - are accepted as valid? Who will work with probation on the problems which are aired? Would the carer or partner be expected to work on the problems in order to help their partner?
c. How might the assessment of the needs of parents and children best be organised?

- Assessment is currently by OASys, a tool focused on criminogenic needs, not on family needs. However, it does look at literacy and disability. The case for assessing family needs would have to be made.
- One of the arguments which could be used for working with offenders on parenting skills might be that criminality in the next generation would be avoided through a long-term strategy of assistance. Sure Start aims to address this subject.
- There are indicators which are predictors for future offending e.g. experience of domestic violence is a predictor of violence in later life, so the link between parenting support and evidence about its effects should be specific.

d. How might information systems be used to highlight parental needs across the caseload?

- OASys might be able to provide some information such as on the literacy problems of offenders who are young parents – but this is obviously of limited use. That information would be held electronically. Currently, it is not known what proportion of the caseload are young parents.
- Strong leadership is very important.
- NOMs may change things. A manager could have responsibility for multi-agency work but may not be the person responsible for child protection. It would be easier to have a leader who has had a multi-agency responsibility for parenting work, alongside family court work.

The interviews revealed mixed feelings about recording information about offender parents. It was clear that the purpose and rationale for recording this information would need to be clearly defined. For example, the rationale for OASys assessments is decreasing re-offending, and practitioners would need to know if support for offender parents was to be part of this agenda. Other concerns raised in relation to data collection included: difficulties in systematically recording the information, different definitions of the family, and deciding which definition was valid; awkwardness in asking for the information and problems around information sharing and child protection.

e. Should there be a senior staff member whose responsibilities include leading on multi-agency work with parents?

- One panel member was not sure whether having one person in probation responsible for multi-agency work on families’ needs was a good idea. However, on the whole, the panel felt it might be worth considering options, such as integrating multi-agency work into senior portfolios or appointing a dedicated person.
- The Reducing Re-offending Action Plan (covering resettlement issues for offenders who are or have been in prison) has a strategic pathway focusing on families and children. Panel members believed this could provide a focus for leadership.
- Depending on the context, they felt probation staff need to be alert and aware of the most useful questions to ask. But, since the Probation Service has become concerned more with risk levels and less with families, opportunities to do this are negligible. The main grade probation officer has been discouraged from demonstrating curiosity about their clients and their families. The emphasis now is on working with offenders and not with their circumstances.
- Panel members felt positively about the potential for more specialist and intensive work such as the Drug Testing and Treatment Order (DTTO) which does involve families.
• Also, probation now issues instructions rather than offers opportunities. Not obeying can put people in breach of their orders. So some approaches from probation officers could disadvantage parents. Equally, parents make an issue of their children’s needs when explaining their failures to attend courses, it works both ways.

f. Comments on ways of strengthening support for parents.

• It is important to define what support might mean. Probation officers would try their best to find resources in the community but may not be fully aware of the needs of their clients - especially where their agenda is about reduction of offending.
• There is a national standard for visiting offenders released on licence but probation’s motive is currently to reduce re-offending rather than assessing and meeting their clients’ needs as young parents.
• Panel members felt that guides to available resources for staff to use could be helpful.
• Voluntary and partnership services present a good way forward. After NOMS the probation officers will be primarily assessing need and ensuring that services are provided, and non-probation officer grade staff would be part of that service. For general parenting skills the voluntary sector would be seen as the main provider and joint expectations would be set up with organisations involved.
• It would be best to make available to offenders services which are also available to the general public. Mainstream provision is ideal, but some organisations for offenders are better than mainstream ones at understanding their needs. Provision should cover subjects that are particularly important for offenders.
• The basis for an offender’s attendance would need to be agreed. If there were people attending on a voluntary basis mixed with others whose attendance was compulsory, their different obligations would have to be discussed in the group.
• The whole issue of offenders’ unreliability would have to be tackled. Offenders need to be challenged in ways they can manage and cope with.
• Particular needs are found among young women who suffer from abusive relationships. Some work would be done with lone parents as well as couples.

g. Obstacles to strengthening support to parents

• The panel members raised questions of parental responsibility; the refocusing of probation on offending individuals; the diversity of the caseload. The latter raises questions of fairness: who is responsible for making decisions about children; what are the responsibilities of parents to children; what is the gender balance in the family?

The panel interviews also highlighted the shift in emphasis in probation work and the decreased emphasis on work with families. If work in this area was to become an integral part of the reducing re-offending agenda, some respondents said this would require a cultural shift, further training for some staff and clear guidelines on how and why support for young parents and families would support the reducing re-offending agenda.
h. How can NOMS help to strengthen support for young parents who are offenders?

- Panel members felt that NOMS might bring clarity to questions of case management and that skilled practitioners might be brought in. Case managers should be well trained to make decisions, and not just fill in forms. Above all, the information collected should be used. It is not likely that the case manager will purchase services for a caseload. Instead, several agencies would provide a range of services. Several participants felt that the most important question was how the services might be provided consistently across the whole of a region.

- Although it was is too early to tell how NOMS might strengthen support for young parent offenders, improved methods of progressing people through the criminal justice system could make it easier to co-ordinate smooth transition from a community order and then to prison and onto licence.

- The general view was expressed that staffing needed to be increased, because the service is currently running on a shoestring. New initiatives are not being launched because of funding restrictions; it was felt that NOMS would take some bedding down until everything is sorted, amalgamated, the systems are set up, etc. At the moment it’s the wider issues such as homelessness and offending which are being looked at.

i. How can the organisation, given that it’s going through a dramatic period of change, also take up these new initiatives?

- One panel member said he felt it would take at least a year or two for new initiatives to come through. He felt that probation had moved in a very different direction in a short space of time.

- Another said that the real opportunity of NOMS is the challenge of providing continuous and consistent services – from prison to prison, after prison, and after return to prison - so that the offenders can complete a programme whenever they are moved on.

j. What would be your major recommendations?

- Establish the need and look at the strategic rationale, indicating how support will reduce offending.

- Further develop the strategic pathway already built into the Reducing Re-offending Action Plan.

- A few years ago probation officers carried out home visits where they would visit and meet the whole family, which was really important. But panel members questioned how they could now do this when they’ve got such huge caseloads? Consideration should be given to home visits.

- In response, another panel member said that if an offender comes out of prison and gives an address then that address is checked out by the home probation officer - especially if they come out on tag. It has to be a really valid address. So that is in effect a ‘home check.’ A home check is really only to find out who is in that accommodation.

- Other panel members saw the home check as an opportunity to see if the accommodation is suitable, as well as what access and nearness the offender has to victims.
Appendix Four

Yots Survey

Yots survey

Overall Response Rate: = 75 out of 157 Yots = 48%

1a. How many children and young people does your Yot work with currently?
(If you are providing an official figure, please provide the current figure rather than an annual total.)

RR = 64 / 85%
The average number of children and young people each Yot was working with was 254 people.

1b. How many of these children and young people are parents?
(Please say if this is an exact number or an estimate.)

RR = 15 / 20%
From those that responded the average number of children and young people who were parents each Yot was working with was six out of 254 = 2.3% of their caseload.

2a. Do you routinely ask all young people you work with (prison or community) if they have children of their own?

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<tr>
<th>RR = 72 = 66%</th>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>No</td>
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<td>No response</td>
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2b. Is this information routinely recorded?

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<th>RR = 66 = 88%</th>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
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<td>No response</td>
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The majority (64%) of respondents said that they would routinely record this information. However, upon further enquiry it emerged that none of the respondents would record this information on a central database. Some respondents said that they would record this information as part of the Assett assessment, however, there is not a question on parenting on this form, so it is down to the individual as to whether they ask and record this information. Many respondents said that they did record this information as part of individual sentence planning but no central records are held. If so, how?
### 2c. If so, to what degree of detail do you record?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of children</th>
<th>RR = 40 = 66%</th>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>47% (35)</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>19% (14)</td>
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<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>35% (26)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ages</th>
<th>RR = 50 = 67%</th>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>42% (31)</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>25% (19)</td>
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<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>33% (25)</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>RR = 48 = 64%</th>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>31% (23)</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>33% (25)</td>
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<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>36% (27)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Address</th>
<th>RR = 48 = 64%</th>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>31% (23)</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>33% (25)</td>
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<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>36% (27)</td>
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### 3a. Do you offer any specific support to young parents?
(Please give examples such as parenting education, young parent groups etc.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supporting activity</th>
<th>RR = 68 = 91%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>59% (44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>32% (24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>9%  (7)</td>
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</table>
Examples:
(Examples were provided by 38 respondents = 51%)
Referral to Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinator
Health Worker
Partner agencies
Referral to parenting programmes / voluntary sector
Teenage midwife team
Telephone help lines
Social Services
Parenting worker
Yot nurses
Health professionals
Local voluntary sector

59% of respondents said that they did offer direct support to young parents. However, all of the examples given included referral on to other agencies. None of the respondents provided direct support themselves.

3b. Do you refer young parents to other statutory or voluntary organisations for advice, information or other support?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RR = 69 = 92%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>88% (66)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4% (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>8% (6%)</td>
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Examples:
(Examples were provided by 53 respondents = 71%)
Health services
Voluntary sector
Sure Start
Teenage Pregnancy Team
Drug & alcohol services
Midwives
Family centre
Health visitors
Family services
Home Start
Barnardos
Benefits advice
Aftercare team
4a. Would the Yot be interested in receiving further information on working with young parents?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RR = 75 = 100%</th>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>No</td>
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<td>No response</td>
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The majority of Yots in the survey do ask young people about parental status and record this information. However, there is no central system for recording information such as a database and methods for doing this varied. The majority of respondents said that they did offer specific support to parents, which in practice meant that they would refer to appropriate support agencies such as the TPU, Social Services and health services. Working with young parents seemed to be an area in which they would like more support and advice.
These four establishments took part in research focus groups over an eighteen month period. Staff implemented a range of improvements at each site. These case studies document the process of change. The notes at each stage reflect the perceptions of prisoners and staff.

**HMP CORNTON VALE**

**Stage 1 – Prisoners**
- Difficulties contacting social workers about access to children and no responses from request forms
- Not long enough to spend with children
- Concerned about how children were coping and would like information on how to explain imprisonment to children
- Children are not segregated from Schedule One offenders
- Family Contact Development Officers are very helpful
- Perceived lack of emotional support
- Lack of privacy when making phone calls and limited time for calls
- Would like staff support in relation to children
- Resettlement help seen as particularly poor and comes too late before leaving.

**Stage 1 – Staff**
- The role of the health visitor needs to be increased to include ante natal support, child development programmes and sexual health
- Telephone contact could be improved
- Parenting classes are due to start but would also like to provide informal parenting groups and support
- Need a dedicated visits group and desperate for a visitors centre
- Would like to provide more information to prisoners on outside agencies.

**Stage 2 – Prisoners**
- Bigger visits room needed and would like more flexibility in room design
- Inconsistency in entitlement to special visits
- Main source of information is other prisoners
- Still no response from Social Services
- Interested in child development programmes
- Like more preparation for release.

**Stage 2 – Focus Groups – Staff**
- The proximity of the MBU to Schedule One offenders is inappropriate
- Tried to get a health visitor to arrange visits to local maternity ward for pregnant women but the hospital will not allow
• Would like the letters sent to children not to be franked with 'Prison Service'
• Have experienced difficulties getting families to attend inductions
• Considerable debate about the benefits of allowing children to visit mothers in their rooms
• Problems with social workers
• Would like to be able to take photos with mums but too much paperwork and bureaucracy involved
• New phone system which does have an automatic message saying that it is a call from prison but it is for the protection of victims
• Family mediation is due to start and video storytelling
• Plans for throughcare centre in progress
• New induction is in place for remand prisoners including time with FCDOs
• Family Liaison Officer on visits will be part of the two permanent staff posted there
• No visitors’ centre yet but making some progress.

Stage 3 – Focus Groups – Prisoners
• Toys in visits room are dirty and there is no variety
• Problems with children's visits and drug testing
• Lots of problems in regard to access to children and support and advice from social services with no-one else to speak to about these issues
• Rights of grandparents are not considered
• Difficult to prove that you are a good parent upon release and lots of issues involved
• Visitors don’t know the rules and it can be stressful for them.

Stage 3 – Staff
• Recently held training for family group conferencing
• Mothers and babies are using independent living units as well as the MBU
• An Information pack is in progress
• Draft parent programme is now with the Governor
• Family induction is a means to breaking barriers, but take up has been slow. They are speaking to other prisons about how to improve the take up
• Would like addiction staff to meet with families with concerns about addiction
• Plan to revamp short home leave system, get family in to meet with staff prior to prisoners home leave to provide information and get background information
• Would like list of solicitors available for family cases
• Smaller tables have been in visits room before and did not work
• Family agenda is an area for expansion and they have found a multi-disciplinary approach is a positive thing
• Family issues are often strongly related to addiction issues – not sure how to address this.

Stage 4 – Prisoners
• Don't like the new phone system as need to phone people who don't know that you are in prison and it gives a recorded message at the beginning
• No ante natal classes
• Would like longer visits
• Strip searching children is very distressing
• Need to be in custody eighteen months to get home leave
• Poor provision for pregnant women in terms of food, allocation of milk etc and difficulty in getting things like Calpol.
Stage 4 – Staff

- Need to better understand what type of contact women want with their children. Is it structured support?
- Ante-natal classes are now available
- They do offer bonding visits for mother and child but there is a low uptake and they are not sure why and enhanced visits also have a low uptake
- Budget for toys is not a problem
- Have to control access to goods such as nappies, wipes etc or they become currency.
- Security staff are as explicit as possible with prisoners re reasons for closed visits etc
- Holding a partnership day with outside organizations e.g. Alcoholics Anonymous, education, housing, and benefits
- Family group conferencing went very well
- Can have mini conferences with families through the addictions unit
- Only one woman wanted information sent out to family regarding FCDO etc
- FCDOs now have a separate uniform
- Women seem to get more demanding – the more they provide the more they want
- Still problems with outside social workers
- Staffing problems are really impacting on what they are able to do in the prison.

Families:

- Difficult for child at first but getting used to new routine
- Would be easier if families could hand in newspapers and magazines. They have to order these through one newsagent who does not accept credit cards – very inconvenient
- FCDOs have been very helpful
- Need more phone cards.

HM YOI DEERBOLT

Stage 1 – Prisoners

- Too far away from home to see the children every week
- Don’t like the idea of children having to go through search procedures
- Would prefer a strip search after the visit rather than family having to be checked
- None of the staff ask if you have children
- Don’t want to have to wear a prison uniform on visits
- Would like to be able to play with children
- Lots of courses are going on in the Education Department
- In the induction class in Education they ask if we have children
- There is a parenting class if you want to go to it. Partners should be able to see what we do on the Parenting Course
- Not enough time on the phone.
- Would like to know about rights as an unmarried father and more help with access issues
- Men’s Health Class is good.

Stage 1 – Staff

- Don’t always ask prisoners if they are parents
- The initial interview on the wing should get all the relevant information, but it doesn’t
- Wing staff tend not to get involved in family issues unless there is a crisis.
• Not always the same staff on duty in the visits area
• We do not have a visits area for families to wait prior to the visit.
• There is a good play area in the visits room
• The prison can be quite difficult to get to if families don’t have transport
• There are plenty of courses to address the problems they may face. There is help if they ask for it
• Chaplaincy help out a lot if there are problems with families
• We don’t have special ‘father’s day’ visits
• Security is the main issue and we don’t have enough staff.

**Stage 2 – Prisoners**

• There is no place for visitors to wait
• Would like to be able to attend births
• Would like to be in a prison nearer home
• Can treat families like they are prisoners
• It’s difficult to know what’s available when you get released
• The play area gets noisy and busy
• Would like to be able to go to the shop area with the children and buy something for them
• Education staff are very helpful
• Prison staff recommend you see probation or a solicitor if you need information about your children, but that takes time.

**Stage 2 – Staff**

• Security prevents us from doing things differently
• The need for a visitors centre is a priority within the prison
• Not all staff know who deals with particular issues in the prison there are so many agencies involved. There is now an officer in post whose responsibility it is to deal with the co-ordination of a voluntary agencies that come into the prison. This will help us identify appropriate services and interventions
• If the prisoner has not come straight from court we take it that any problems or concerns have been sorted out at the previous establishment
• If prisoner is enhanced they get three visits a month
• Every prisoner on the induction wing is given a booklet to send to their family.

**Stage 2 – Families**

• We don’t always see the same staff, so it’s difficult to get to know anyone
• Prison is miles from anywhere; it takes ages to get here for such a short time
• This prison doesn’t have a Visitors’ Centre where you can wait before the visits but the staff let us into the visits room earlier
• It would be good if there was someone to talk to about the visit
• If we could just see inside the prison it might alleviate some of our worries
• There is a nice play area, but all the toys are for babies; nothing much for the older children.
• People with children should be allowed to sit nearer to the play area so children don’t run around everywhere
• There should be visiting days for those who have children, separate from non-parents.

**Stage 3 – Prisoners**

• Would like to know if the prison staff see all the research done
• Want more time for visits and longer visits
• It is difficult to get help in home towns and staff say we have to contact probation outside but that takes time.
• Want better resettlement courses that help with real issues
• Would like longer phone calls for parents
• It is difficult taking young babies into visits
• Should be allowed to be there for the birth or as soon afterwards
• Need help on how to get to home on release day as the prison is so far out
• Would like to be able to hold babies on visits.

Stage 3 – Staff
• It is difficult for young children to sit still at visits time. Special days would be more sensible but security and staffing levels prevent this from happening
• The visits staff depend on NEPACS to staff the play area and tea bar
• More voluntary organisations are now being involved
• Regular departmental reviews are to take place
• Education carried out a survey of prisoners needs and all classes were then reviewed and adjusted to suit changing attitudes
• More help is now given to resettlement throughout the establishment with a view to treating the prisoners as an individual so not just meeting targets set by Head Office
• Would like to see fathers have more interaction with children and take responsibility
• Gym staff have reviewed sessions available and have implemented times that are focused on teaching fathers games to play with their young children. Gym staff are looking at fathers keeping fit with children incorporating healthier diets
• Mentoring systems are being developed in particular with town visits
• High intensity training unit is almost at the stage of implementation and will be available to those who have undergone full assessments
• Travel is one of the main problems. It is a long journey for most families and public transport is not so frequent
• Staff should ask if they have children and not wait for the prisoner to offer the information.

Stage 3 – Families
• Family days would be good, so the kids can play with their Dad and move around more.
• Families would like to be more involved before prisoners are released
• Staff have been helpful and phone messages have been passed on to him
• There should be someone to talk to so we know what to expect and what is going on. There is no support for families who are visiting for the first time
• More information about finances welcomed
• More information about where to get help in our own home areas
• It would be nice to have a meal together, not just crisps and biscuits.

Stage 4 – Prisoners
• Can spend time with the writer in residence and do a story for children
• Possibility of making a tape to send out to children
• Would like to send photos to children and family
• Need more information on getting access to children when released and how to get name onto the birth certificate
• Families should be part of some of the courses in the prison
• Chaplain is always helpful and will get information
• Education department has a good induction course
• More help should be given to getting the correct training to get a job when released
• If we do parenting course we should be entitled to more visits.
Stage 4 – Staff

- Are looking at a new ways forward for young parents
- Parents should be encouraged to write to children separately from their partners
- More skills input is being given to those parents with basic skills difficulties. The National Literacy Trust hope to get involved with the Education Department
- Discussions have taken place about fathers being able to play outside with their children whilst on visits but due to security and staffing, implementation can be slow.
- Connexions are involved in the prison and in local areas
- Encouragement should be given to prisoners to attend men’s health classes in education and link with health care centres
- More advice about CSA and rights should be given
- All courses are well advertised booklets are readily available to everyone
- Focus is being put on realistic work and opportunities after release
- Main problem is still distance from home town
- Parenting classes are offered to everyone who attends education
- It would be beneficial if partners had more information about the course or could even attend some of the sessions. Families should be part of the relationship course
- Prisons should stop focusing on targets and ticking boxes
- Emphasis is not only on offending behaviour but on social factors which involve relationships with parents and children
- More training should be available to the staff so that they can better facilitate /incorporate family visits
- The prison should not have to depend on voluntary organisations to provide core services
- These focus groups should bring together all relevant parties.

HM YOI HYDEBANK WOOD

Stage 1 – Prisoners

- Most lived with partners outside and had support from family
- Can go out for the birth of a child (as unescorted leave) depending on security status
- No parenting courses and would like to have them
- Lack of support from outside organizations
- Local transport is poor
- Need visiting area for parents with a play area
- No dedicated staff for family contact
- Families have had problems getting information when they ring the prison
- Currently rebuilding visits area and the temporary area is very crowded
- Visits entitlement seems to be less than elsewhere in the UK
- Would like family days
- Would like legal advice.

Stage 1 – Staff

- Staff said prisoners are generally not allowed out for births. Hospital visits are usually permitted for serious illness, staff would not be keen to be present as escorts at births
- New visits hall is being built for visits but currently no place for visitors to wait apart from the bus shelter
- Distance is not a problem as most families are local and Northern Ireland is a small place
- No dedicated visits staff
• Staff on visits are in a difficult position as drugs have been found twice in nappies
• Have outside organizations relevant to family ties and resettlement coming in regularly
• Need to establish links between programmes i.e. co-ordination of person doing work on alcohol issues with family programmes and better linking of initiatives
• Now drafting a parenting programme
• Frustration at prisoners who show interest in things and then don't turn up
• Need for improved access to information
• Long term planning is required
• Would like to see priority given to prisoners' children
• Resources are a barrier.

Stage 2 – Prisoners
• No toys in the visits room
• Would like evening visits
• There is some flexibility in visits re getting up when children are there
• The drug dog indicates innocent people
• No decorations or anything at Christmas
• New booking system planned in which they have to ring visitors to give them a code to book their own visit which is very inconvenient
• Problems with letters not being sent out
• Few families did not need help
• Name and prison number has to be on all letters
• No place for visitors to wait.

Stage 2 – Staff
• Tried to get toys and crayons into visits but health and safety concerns about transmission of disease (e.g. hepatitis). Huge dispute about this and trying to find out what other prisons do
• Visitors' centre is being built and will have separate area for family visits
• Parenting classes from local Sure Start did not go ahead as they were refused security clearance
• Security takes precedence over bonding visits
• Should be some scope for some sort of link during births
• Information about young parents is collected to inform Prison Link who can then make contact with Social Services
• Would like to start some sort of informal support re relationships through the resettlement team
• Average sentence is three to four months which makes things difficult
• Like lead from HQ on family ties. Not even the equivalent of a Safer Custody Group, no one to deal with visits, no dedicated resettlement worker
• Not much flexibility due to small size and the priority is the safe running of the establishment
• Always individual responsibility to take initiatives forward
• Tried evening visits but take up was low.

Stage 3 – Prisoners
• Parenting class are really good
• Evening classes are difficult to participate in as it is the main opportunity to use the telephone
• Visitors can’t come back in after a nappy change
• Teething problems with new computer booking system
• Staff can end a visit if a child runs around
• Would like legal advice.
Stage 3 – Staff
- Looking at introducing child-centred visits when visits centre is complete
- They are piloting positive role modelling for sixteen and seventeen year olds
- Last visits survey was several years ago
- Parenting group started but currently at night so has to compete with evening activities
- Frustrating putting in lots of time and effort to arrange things for prisoners and then they don’t turn up
- Due to expand the prison to include women, which will cause lots of problems
- No regular family contact person
- There is a need for better sharing of information
- No staff uniforms at all
- Will be a crèche in new visits
- They don’t really have outside organizations coming in to provide support
- Need more feedback from prisoners about what they want
- Have very good module on the parenting course – ‘parenting from a distance’.

Stage 4 – Prisoners
- Would like all day visits
- Were not aware special childrens’ letters without prison stamps were possible
- Lots of changes to visits i.e. they vary in time
- Messages from family not passed on.

Stage 4 – Staff
- Just had first juvenile assessment meetings with families which included a tour of the prison and went very well
- Resettlement meeting is now happening five weeks after arrival
- Looking at how best to do child visits
- Parenting programme has been changed to a morning
- Family liaison person is provided through Youth Opportunity
- Will start conducting a visitors’ survey
- New booking system which means the families themselves decide when to turn up and they have had ‘no shows’
- Steering group has been established re family contact work across three Northern Ireland prisons which is very useful to find out what other prisons are doing
- Been very useful to discuss family contact together. Often overshadowed by other priorities.

Families
- Difficult for the children in visits with no toys and not being able to run around
- Travel is very difficult
- Difficulties booking visits
- Letters are censored so can’t be very open
- Prison has lots of Governors and it is very complicated when ringing up
- Visits staff change every week
- Sometimes partner does not get evening time due to staff shortages which effect phone calls
- Staff don’t seem to know anything about child-centred visits
- Nobody for partner to talk to about feelings and fears within the prison
- The selection criteria for the parenting course appeared to be arbitrary
- Would like support.
HM YOI POLMONT

Stage 1 – Prisoners
- Not asked whether they have children at induction and don't know about parenting classes
- Have bonding visits once a week
- Video stories are available and a play area for children which is very messy and dirty
- Would like family days
- Would like to wear their own clothes at visits
- Good support for housing, jobs etc
- Would like staff not in uniform for visits
- Lots of queries re custody of their children
- Would like family days, outdoor visits, a separate visiting room for bonding visits
- Don't like being reprimanded in front of families.

Stage 1 – Staff
- Population of young offender fathers is very low and many do not come to the attention of staff unless there is a crisis
- Some difficulties getting prisoners to identify themselves as fathers - one way would be to have Christmas gifts for children
- Issues of multiple partners/children
- No work is done with families directly but do have a family induction
- Can do confidential counselling between partners (FCDO)
- Desire to make visits more child-friendly and hope to introduce special chairs for children
- Security is always an issue
- Do have designated visits staff
- Don't have a visitors’ centre or play worker but have tried get funding for this
- Do provide voluntary and statutory throughcare
- Cognitive skills do address relationships with others
- Polmont is generally very active in finding ways of encouraging links between young offenders and their families
- Have made significant shifts recently in ensuring initiatives are in place like parenting groups but major shifts can take years
- After release advised of throughcare services but feedback is very limited
- Not easy to apply for outside funding for things like play workers
- Trying to take forward: family mediation, play workers and sexual health sessions.

Stage 2 – Prisoners
- General perception that not much has changed since the previous group
- Possibility of a video link for births if a prisoner can't attend
- Bonding visits can be stopped due to drugs suspicion
- Can put in requests for photos to be taken with children
- Housing help is only for homeless
- Only do parenting course to gain bonding visit
- Children can get upset when they can't stand up during visits
- Would like more use of home leave
- Practical pre-release support is provided but no support re transition and relationships
- Would like staff to be more relaxed about things families bring to a visit with babies e.g. food, bottles etc.
Stage 2 – Staff
- Staff uniform changes are under discussion
- Staff visits group is now smaller to maintain consistency
- Carpets being deep cleaned and the health visitor expressed concern re play area. An officer has been appointed to deal with this
- Change is slow
- Funding is a big problem
- Only allowed to run eight bonding visits a week but currently about twenty prisoners a week who want them
- Family days are being planned
- No specific policy on breast feeding
- Would love to extend parenting group to whole YOI but not possible with staffing levels
- Still need something about parenting in prison to include in the parenting course (Like module on parenting from a distance)
- Pre-release programme does mainly deal with hard issues e.g. housing
- Lack of awareness and training of staff taking messages from families
- SACRO do provide family mediation work.

Stage 3 – Prisoners
- Would like to know if it would be possible to change nappies in a bonding visit if supervised
- Access for compassionate leave varies
- Concerns re parental rights
- Parenting course seen as very helpful
- Couples counselling would be helpful
- Difficulties for families booking visits
- Would like more access to things like escorted leave for things other than life and death situations
- Would like a governor in on the focus groups rather than making points through a researcher.

Stage 3 – Staff
- Issues over finance for things like toys and visits
- Staff felt feedback from prisoners was particularly negative and failed to recognize all the progress made. A recent visits survey showed much more positive results
- Staff want to take into account negative comments so they can address them but feel prisoners should take into account the whole picture i.e. prisoners get seven visits per month
- Drawn up staff guidelines for bonding visits
- Prisoners assume if they do parenting class they will automatically get bonding visits but not enough room to do this every week
- Normal visit rules apply and it can be difficult for young children to understand that they can’t get up and play
- There are difficulties cleaning the visits hall when visits are close together
- Looking at family days for the spring
- They have a family involvement group that meets about once a month
- Trying to focus the parenting course more on children under three
- Storytelling is going well
- Difficult to accomplish things with limited resources, need creative dedicated staff with special interests who are willing to work extra hours to establish things
- Family conferencing is being piloted
- Drug dogs only used occasionally. Families go through metal detector and they can’t take things into the visits hall, but not otherwise searched as they feel this would detract from the work they are trying to do with families
- Looking at change of prisoner uniform for visits
- Developing ways of involving families in action plans and pre-release meetings especially where there are drug issues
- They have developed a family awareness group for families which seems very helpful for putting minds at ease and they have had positive feedback
- Can be difficult sharing information within the prison about all that is going on
- National FCDO seminars are up and running
- No immediate plans for a visitors' centre
- Purchased things for children to do whilst at the visits tables.

**Stage 4 – Prisoners**
- It is a problem that bonding visits have been moved to mid-week
- Can walk around in second hour of bonding visits but not the first which confuses children
- Should be automatically entitled to bonding visits if you can prove you are a father
- It is good that staff let visitors in – even if they are late they show understanding
- Concerns about bars on windows near play area
- Would like a separate area for bonding visits
- Can get photo with child every three months through the FCDO.

**Stage 4 – Staff**
- Discussions regarding visits outside in the summer are taking place
- Number of visits has recently doubled at the same time as a reduction in staffing which has resource implications – the visits room is not equipped to deal with seven hundred visits each month
- In bonding visits children are left to run wild in the corner while prisoners sit chatting with their partners
- Untried visits and agent visits now take place at the same time as bonding visits so the more relaxed bonding visits are not possible.
- All initiatives such as special visits, bonding visits etc. have to depend on the good will of staff to volunteer time; they are ad hoc rather than rostered and impact on everything e.g. security and finance. Carrying them out and maintaining them as a regular part of a regime very difficult in practice.
- Good will is fine in the short term but you can’t depend on it to sustain change in the long-term
- Emphasis from Headquarters is on the number of visits rather than the quality
- Security is a constant issue but how far does this override family contact?
- General feelings from prisoners about lack of control e.g. when child is in care of addicted mother, staff can do little more than contact Social Services for them
- Child custody is a constant issue particularly where fathers are not named on the birth certificate
- Children are in the visits room at the same time as Schedule One offenders which raises concerns over child protection
- Ideas need to be driven from management; they need clear information on management responsibility
- New Family Awareness Group is the main method of contact and support with families
- Some family contact work is done through Youth at Risk
- General dissatisfaction from prisoners about the new telephone booking system.

**Families:**
- Staff have always been fine but some families would not wish to talk to members of staff
- Don’t know what to expect on release
- Information about how to cope on release or what to expect would be useful
• Not enough time for visits
• Kids get bored and frustrated at visits
• No contact with outside organizations
• Bonding visits can be crowded but get to know other mums that way
• Would be good to be able to walk around more
• Got to know all staff who have been very good.
Young Parents
From Custody to Community

This report and resource marks the end of a three year project designed to prompt a response to the needs of young parents who offend. It looks in detail at both policy and practice for young parents, giving numerous examples of innovative schemes and services in custody and in the community run by the voluntary, independent and statutory sector.

In addition, the report contains the findings from focus groups conducted by the Prison Reform Trust in the UK at Deerbolt, Huntercombe, Chelmsford, Holloway, Askham Grange, Cornton Vale, Polmont and Hydebank Wood, and the results of surveys undertaken with both Youth Offending Teams and National Probation Service to find out what support they currently provide to young parents.

The DVD enclosed with the report contains two powerful short films, the first, by Dawson films, looking at young mothers’ experiences in the criminal justice system, the second at how young fathers, their children and partners cope during and after a father’s prison sentence. This film was produced in partnership with Relate, which has been delivering a range of courses for young fathers in custody and their partners in the community.

The report and DVD combined provide a unique and accessible resource for practitioners and policy makers alike.