

What can I do?

- The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is the systematic approach that service providers must use to assess the needs of a child and their family and decide how those needs should be met. The aim is to identify children's needs early. Completing a CAF, and ensuring support is in place for the child and family, may help them to cope better with the experience of being separated from a family member.
- Be non-judgemental – the child and other family members have not committed any crime
- Make sure that you develop positive relationships with parent/carers so that they feel able to share their family members' imprisonment with you and seek information and support.
- It is important to realise that sometimes imprisonment of a family member can be a positive change in children's lives. If a child has been living with the experience of domestic abuse or drug/alcohol abuse then the imprisonment of the offender can give the child an opportunity to thrive.

Further information is available from:

Action for Prisoners Families –

www.prisonersfamilies.org.uk

Families do Matter -

www.familiesdomatter.co.uk

SHARP -

www.s-h-a-r-p.org.uk

National Offender Management Service -

www.justice.gov.uk

HM Prison Service –

www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk

How you can help an offender's family

Did you know....?

At least 160,000 children
in England and Wales
experience the imprisonment
of a parent each year.



Did you know...?

7% of children will live through the imprisonment of a parent during their time at school.

Children of prisoners are three times more at risk of mental health problems than their peers.

There are 2½ times as many children of prisoners as there are in LA care.

Children of offenders are an invisible group: there is no shared, robust information on who they are, little awareness of their needs and no systematic support.

There is currently no system for sharing information about the needs of prisoners families.

Change for Children

All children should be able to meet the five outcomes of the 'Every Child Matters Agenda'. Children of offenders may experience barriers that prevent them from meeting these outcomes

1. Barriers to being healthy

- Children may take on the role of young carer with the family
- Feelings of anxiety at the loss and separation from a family member
- Child's carer may be struggling to cope with the situation and may not be able to meet the needs of the child.
- Child may experience the loss of friends and family through moving home
- Fear and anxiety increase the risk of mental health problems
- Low self esteem could impact on the way the family members look after themselves
- May choose to avoid others by staying indoors, rather than playing outdoors

2. Barriers to staying safe

- Shame and stigma can lead to some parents not telling school and other services, which can leave the child vulnerable and isolated
- Children can become at risk of being bullied or becoming a bully
- Families can experience unwelcome attention from the media which leaves them vulnerable in their communities, especially if the crime is seen as socially unacceptable

3. Barriers to enjoying and achieving

- Family may have to deal with negative reactions from other family members, friends and the community
- Anxiety and stress may prevent the child from enjoying leisure time
- Changes in children's behaviour may mean that school is no longer an enjoyable place
- Family income is likely to drop – this may mean that accessing activities may become difficult

4. Barriers to making a positive contribution

- Low self esteem/lack of confidence may mean the child chooses not to engage in activities
- May find it hard to make new friendships or join new groups due to the worry of people making judgements about the family situation

5. Barriers to achieving economic well-being

- Families are likely to experience reduced income
- The cost of prison visiting is high
- Drop in income causes extra stress
- Costs of possibly moving accommodation
- Additional costs of supporting prisoners (clothing, phone cards, letters etc.)