

**Minutes of the Cross Party Group
on Children Affected by Parental Imprisonment
13th May 14**

Date: 13/05/2014
Venue: Conference Room 21 - Ty Hywel

Members Present:

Christine Chapman AM (Chair)	Aled Roberts AM
Jocelyn Davies AM	Suzy Davies AM

Delegates Present:

Caroline Ryan (Cardiff YMCA)	Charlie Cable (SOVA)
Corin Morgan-Armstrong (HMP Parc)	Emma Reed (Barnardo's Cymru)
Emma Wools (Probation)	Elaine Speyer (Minutes)
Gareth Williams (Cardiff YMCA)	Gemma Jones (Women's Aid)
Ingrid Zammit (NOMS)	Jack Stanley (Peter Hain's Office)
Jessica Joyce (Cardiff University)	Joanne Mulcahy (PACT)
Julie Morgan (Assembly Member)	Justine Jenkins (St Giles Trust)
Laura Tranter (Barnardo's Cymru)	Lindsey Pudge (Barnardo's Cymru)
Lyndon Samuel (Gwent Police)	Neera Sharma (Barnardo's)
Robert Jones (Wales Governance Centre)	Robin Lewis (AM Support staff)
Sam Clutton (Barnardo's Cymru)	Sian Mile (AM Support Staff)
Sian Thomas (NAfW MRS)	Tim Ruscoe (Barnardo's Cymru)
Trish Woodhouse (PACT)	Yvonne Rodgers (Barnardo's Cymru)

Apologies:

Cathie Brannigan (Waterloo Foundation)	Eve Willmott (Cardiff University)
John Tossell (HMP Swansea)	Tony Kirk (Welsh Government)
Zoe Lancelott (Rhondda Cynon Taff)	

1. Introduction & welcome

Christine Chapman AM welcomed those attending the inaugural group and set out the importance of taking action on the issue of children affected by parental imprisonment. Christine Chapman reported on the positive response from other AMs and from the Deputy Minister on behalf of Welsh Government in relation to the recent short debate on the issue that she had tabled.

Christine Chapman was nominated as Chair of the Cross Party Group by Suzy Davies AM.

Barnardo's Cymru will act as secretariat to the Cross Party Group.

2. Presentations

The Powerpoint presentations from the meeting will be distributed to all those who attended the inaugural meeting and are available on request from elaine.Speyer@barnardos.org.uk

Three films were also shown at the inaugural meeting. One illustrating the work of the Invisible Walls Project, one entitled '*Reversible Writing*' and one providing a case study from the Barnardo's Cymru CSOF project.

Corin Morgan-Armstrong, Head of Family Interventions and IWW, HMP Parc

Corin Morgan-Armstrong presented on the innovative work being delivered in relation to family intervention and support into the community for prisoners and their families by HMP Parc and their partner organisations. His presentation included statistics on the re-offending rates, estimates of the number of children affected by parental imprisonment and the impact of this in terms of poor outcomes, anecdotally he presented that up to 2,000 children per month were visiting prisoners in Parc per month. Corin gave some examples of the impact of work that helps prisoners to understand the ways in which their offending behaviour affects their families and in particular their children. The work being undertaken at Parc has revealed the lack of support offered to many children and their families, even where the family has complex needs. Family intervention work at Parc and into the community through the Invisible Walls project is aimed at supporting the whole family (including the father inside) to reduce reoffending today and inter-generational offending in the future.

Corin also spoke about work with schools through the Invisible Walls Accord which has the support of many organisations and which aims to increase the identification of and referral to appropriate support for children affected by parental imprisonment. HMP Parc has also been involved in direct work on education, bringing teachers and parents together through parent-teacher evenings within the prison or through Skype and through the delivery of language and play and numeracy and play to families at the prison.

Jo Mulcahy, PACT Cymru, Project Manager

Jo Mulcahy set out the work of the national charity PACT which aims to support offenders and their families and to minimise the harm that can be caused by imprisonment on offenders, families and communities. Jo then provided an insight into how children experience the imprisonment of a parent, using examples of the ways in which children supported by PACT have expressed their confusion about what is happening to them and their families. Jo described how they often experience services stopping engagement with a family once a parent enters the judicial system. PACT argues there is no reason intervention should stop at this point. She set out the ways in which the lack of systems to identify the fact that a person is a parent at the point they are remanded or sentenced means that the needs of children can remain hidden and support for the prisoner in terms of parenting is not identified. Jo discussed the fact that many parents are unsure of who to trust to ask for help and that they often feel let down by other services.

PACT operate projects which support fathers in prison and their families at HMP Swansea, HMP Cardiff, and HMP Prescoed. The work supports families in explaining what is happening

to their children and with issues such as approaching their child's school to explain the family circumstances. PACT supports family visit days and contact that can improve the quality of the relationship between a father and his children. Baby groups are provided for fathers and their partners within the prison to support the attachment between an absent father and his baby, including for those fathers whose children are born after the father has been detained. PACT also deliver the Big Lottery funded 'Supporting Young Parents in Prison' project which provides bespoke interventions to young parents between the ages of 18 and 25 across the public prison estate in Wales.

Jo also provided information about the Welsh Practitioners Network which she has established and which now includes approximately 300 people and supports the sharing of good practice.

Laura Tranter, Children's Services Manager, CAPI services, Barnardo's Cymru

Laura provided a background to the awareness raising and development work that has been taken forward by those presenting at the meeting and others over the past 6 years. The NOMS (National Offender Management Service) Children and Family Pathway has advocated for change in relation to this agenda throughout this time and Laura now chairs this group. Barnardo's has identified CAPI (Children Affected by Parental Imprisonment) as a priority issue for the organisation as part of their work to support the most vulnerable children and young people and voluntary funds have been invested to continue community based work in Wales for a further two years.

Laura set out the current services which are run in Wales by Barnardo's Cymru. This includes the community partner element of the Invisible Walls project based at HMP Parc. The project seeks to integrate the support and interventions offered to specific men in custody with support, treatment and advice to the whole family. The Community Support for Offenders (CSOF) project operates across nine local authorities in South Wales and seeks to raise awareness and develop a robust community model of support for the children and families of offenders. The majority of the families that the service works with have complex needs. Significantly the project includes a seconded offender manager who is raising awareness via meetings, briefings and ongoing liaison with probation teams, together with delivery of Hidden Sentence training within probation and multi-agency settings. Laura also spoke about the planned HMP Parc purpose built visits centre. Barnardo's Cymru staff will be based at the centre which will be the first of its kind in the UK and is where families will be able to access a range of interventions both pre and post visits.

Laura introduced the handbook for schools which will be launched at the end of May and includes a checklist and practical advice for schools. The resource aims to support schools in identifying, understanding the needs and responding to children affected by parental imprisonment. Rhondda Cynon Taf was offered as a leading area that has secured copies of the resource for all of its schools and has included children affected by parental imprisonment within their education well-being strategy.

3. Questions

The Chair asked attendees to consider the contents of the forward work plan for the Cross Party Group and invited them to ask questions of those who had presented evidence at the inaugural meeting.

Jocelyn Davies AM asked whether the statistic of 72% of offenders returning to prison within 12-24 months was for all prisoners. Corin Morgan-Armstrong answered that it represented all of those released from a custodial sentence, not including those on remand, successfully appealed, or if the charges against them had been dropped.

Robert Jones (Wales Governance Centre) asked what scope there was for those children affected by parental imprisonment in North Wales, as offenders from this area predominantly go across the border to serve their custodial sentence. Laura Tranter answered that Barnardo's are training staff across Wales, they are aware of issues in North Wales as well as for children of female offenders serving sentences in England. Corin Morgan-Armstrong discussed the implications of the planned prison in Wrexham. He added that irrespective of being from North Wales all children need to be fairly and equally treated and their issues overcome. The aim of the Invisible Walls Accord is for all schools across Wales to be signed up.

Aled Roberts AM stated that in 2 and a half years North Wales could have the largest prison in UK, he voiced his concerns of the discourse with Ministry Of Justice focussed on procurement in relation to the building of the prison without discussion on approaches such as support infrastructures much contact with Welsh Government. Discussion took place on the need for the devolved approach to be different. Ingrid Zammit (NOMS) answered this question on behalf of NOMS saying they are in the development stages of a prison in Wrexham but that the concerns raised by Aled Roberts would be addressed as things developed.

A question was asked as to whether Parc had experience of working with families from a greater distance, as Wrexham will potentially house prisoners from further away, meaning there will be families who are a long distance from their father. Corin Morgan-Armstrong gave examples of prisoners within Parc who have connected with their children around the world using their Skype suite. Some of those Skype contacts had been the first time the prisoner had spoken to his family in years, Corin added that although not ideal, Skype had huge impact on the behaviour of the offender and the wellbeing of his children. Corin added that although Parc are the only prison doing this presently, we can have similar processes throughout Wales and the UK. Panel members added that family engagement was not just about physical contact but also writing, phone calls, birthdays cards etc, contact with school is also important e.g. parent teacher meetings taking place through Skype, all of which has a huge impact.

Discussion took place on issues around female prisoners, including the potential impact of a women's section of the new prison in North Wales, although it was argued that there would not be a female section of this prison, it was suggested that women were spread across the UK. The difficulties of maintaining contact and supporting resettlement were discussed.

Jack Stanley, (Peter Hain's Office) said that Parc sounds as though they are progressive he asked how Parc manage the resettlement period and whether the discharge grant is enough? Corin Morgan-Armstrong described the work of Parc which begins before an offender comes into custody and arguably from arrest, with police station cells housing information about

services to supporting families in the court process, the work needs to start before custodial sentence begins. A question was asked as to whether it is just Parc that offers this. Corin said that they were not unique in this. It was added that Wales has a great opportunity because of the fairly unique drive and track record. Within NOMS, current business development is looking at ways to replicate family visits in other prisons across UK. Corin added that within the first 72 hours of a prisoner coming into custody, a full family induction process is undertaken. Corin suggested this is probably not enough, there needs to be more on the bigger picture and wraparound support.

Emma Wools (Probation) added that within the restructure of NOMS there were pockets of good practice and more opportunities for roll out. Recently the Wales Reducing Reoffending Strategy was launched and offers a good opportunity to get family issues on the agenda particularly within the I.O.M (Integrated Offender Management) model.

Corin responded to Yvonne Rodgers (Barnardo's Cymru), question on the Invisible Walls Accord with more detail on the initiative.

There was some discussion and recognition of elderly prisoners who represent the fastest growing prison population and the subsequent impact on familial relationships, recognising that grandparents are sometimes primary carers.

4. Forward Work Plan

Assembly Members were called into National Assembly business.

Tim Ruscoe (Barnardo's Cymru) reflected back on the inaugural meeting and thanked presenters and attendees for their support in relation to this important issue. Tim Ruscoe set out the forward plan for the group and explained that the work of the group will be supported through research. Attendees were encouraged to feed in issues and expertise to inform and support the work of the Cross Party Group. Tim Ruscoe committed to ensure that there was good communication about the work of the group.