

Lancashire's Charter of Rights for Children of Prisoners



LANCASHIRE
VIOLENCE REDUCTION
NETWORK

Lancashire's Charter of Rights for Children of Prisoners

This charter has been produced alongside primary school children of Lancashire with experience of a parent, or family member in prison. It focuses on recommendations for children in families affected by parental imprisonment and expectations of services that work with and alongside children and families of Lancashire.

There is currently no requirement for people who are in prison in England and Wales to declare if they have children when they are placed in custody. While parents are encouraged to declare if they have children, there is no systematic or central system that records this information.

It is estimated that approximately 200,000 plus children have a parent sent to prison each year and approximately 17,000 children have a mother in prison. Children's daily lives alter dramatically when a parent receives a custodial sentence. Effects may include increased risk of poor physical and mental health, breakdown/ lack of support networks. Young people may be exposed to trauma, if they have witnessed or been exposed to criminal activities as well as being present during arrest, feelings of loss, stigmatisation, alongside impact on school and learning.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 1989 - The Convention has 54 articles in total. Articles 43–54 are about how adults and governments must work together to make sure all children can enjoy all their rights provide expert advice and assistance on children's rights.

Beyond the question of fundamental rights, we are aware that there are however no specific articles of the Convention that deal specifically with the situation of children who have a parent in prison.

The LVRN have sought to consider the UNCRC and the voices of children within Lancashire to produce a Children's Charter of Rights and accompanying resources to support this hidden cohort of children.



Lancashire's Charter of Rights for Children of Prisoners

1 The best interests of the child

I will have my rights and interests reflected and considered in the decisions and actions of services that work with me and my family.

Services will hear my views and give my views the importance they require.

2 The child's right to be heard

Services will collect and record my views in an environment that is conducive to free expression.

Services will consider (give weight to); my views considering my age and level of maturity.

3 The child's right to preserve relations with their family

Services will fully explore if I should and could be allowed to visit my parent and/or significant other in their place of detention.

Services will produce written documentation on how they will support me throughout this process.

4 The child's right to be brought up by their parents

Services will fully consider should or how could I remain with my mother. This will be on an individual basis.

5 The child's right not to be separated from both parents

I will not experience discrimination due to parental imprisonment. Services will examine which solutions would be best for me, considering my individual circumstances; then list all the possibilities available given this unusual situation of parental incarceration (of one or both parents).

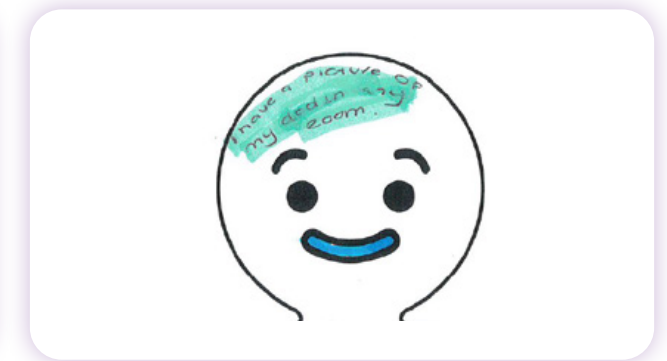
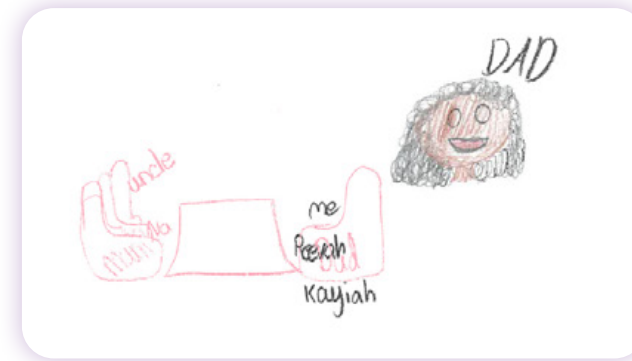
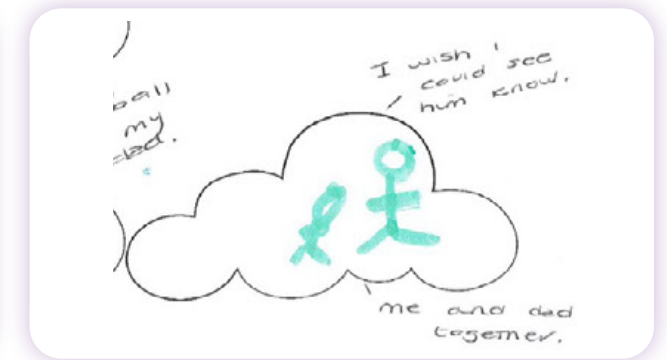
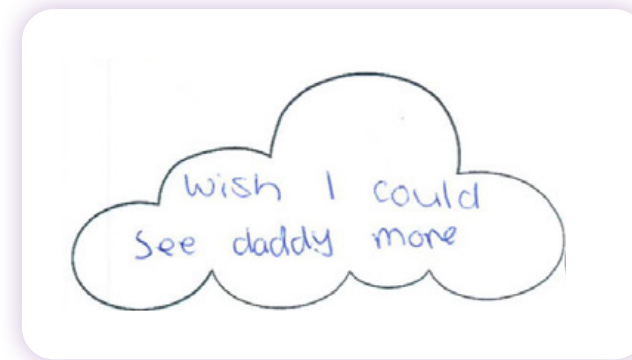
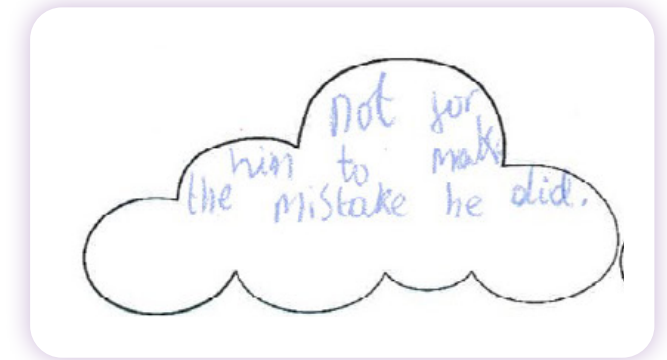
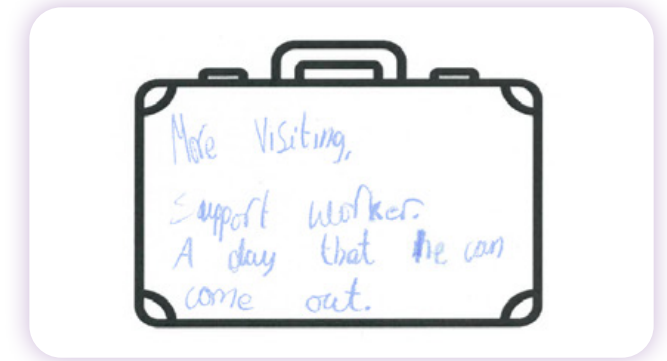
6 The right of the child who is deprived of a family environment to receive appropriate alternative care

Services should support my concrete life circumstances giving due consideration to the principle of individualisation; support my care during the circumstances of my parent's incarceration and its impact.



Lancashire Childrens Views and Needs

In Spring 2024 the Lancashire Violence Reduction Network worked closely with the Child and Family wellbeing service, Lancashire Schools and POPs to ensure the voices, views, needs, and wants of Lancashire children were at the top of the agenda for developing the Childrens Charter. The voices of Lancashire children are not different from thousands of children across the UK however the system that should seek to ensure the rights of the child are upheld continues to ignore and increase feelings of shame and guilt across Childrens and families life's. Below is a small overview of the voices of Lancashire children and the responses and systems in place now need to come together and do more for Lancashire children.



Developing partnership principles and practice across - CSC, CFW, Education, health, and prisons family support.

Current projects in Lancashire - Lancashire County Council Children and Family Wellbeing Service (CFW) - Lancaster Farms Positive Futures

In 2023 two CFW Group Workers supported POPs (Partners of Prisoners) and other agencies at a Family Day at HMP Lancaster Farms. The day provided an opportunity for prisoners and their partners to engage in activities with their children as well as receive advice and support from various agencies.

Following the success of the event, it was suggested that CFW offer parenting programmes at the prison. Lancaster Farms were very keen to support this project and with two CFW family support worker undertaking a five-day prison induction to be able to release keys and supervise the prisoners during the parenting programme.

Since August 2024, CFW have been delivering a bespoke parenting programme called 'Positive Futures' which incorporates elements of Triple P, Positive Relationships and Trauma Informed approaches. The course takes place one morning a week over four weeks in the Education area at The Farms. It has been well received with 7-10 men in each cohort and we even have a waiting list for future courses. The Group Workers also see real benefits of delivering the course, commenting "In the sessions all the men have opened up to us about their past and what they had been through. The men reflected a lot and were all saying they want to break the cycle for their own children".

Positive feedback from the male prisoners:

"The course will make me more positive and an all-round better parent"

"It has given me the tools to be a better parent"

"Impressed with the course and learnt a lot"

"I will be more aware of my behaviour in front of my children"

"I've learnt what it takes to be a better Dad"

Future Plans

CFW have also linked in with the support of POPS with HMP Kirkham, with a plan for February 2024 for CFW to offer a similar type of provision to Kirkham considering parental conflict, parenting and trauma.

CFW also intend to be part of any family fun days the prison run and have a information noticeboard in the visits hall.

Future return on temporary license (ROTL) being held in part CFW family hubs, with families joining their partners, with the aim being that the men and their partners are granted ROTL to attend bespoke groups at the family hub.

CFW are conscious that all men might not be from the Wyre and Fylde area, so as a service we are looking at how any support we start continues upon release by linking the men and their families up with workers in their own family hubs, or even if the family are known to Family Intensive Support that this offer of support at such groups becomes part of any early help plan.

Further reading and information

Resources Hub | Explore | Lancashire Violence Reduction Network – Impact Assessment Toolkit, 7 minute briefing Webinar- resources for children and families and professionals.

<https://lancsvrn.co.uk/resources/>

Focus on attachment and the impact of disrupted attachment - Parental incarceration affects children's emotional and behavioural outcomes: A longitudinal cohort study of children aged 9 to 13 years.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/epub/10.1177/0165025421995918>

Psychological safety and emotion wellbeing of the child - Professionals - Prison Advice and Care Trust

<https://www.prisonadvice.org.uk/professionals/>

Impact of alternative care - CMP0010 - Evidence on The right to family life: children whose mothers are in prison.

<https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/96287/html/>

Integrated multi-agency approach- development of the child impact on pre-sentencing reports and other agency decision making processes - Blog: The importance of Child Impact Assessments for children affected by maternal imprisonment | Prison Reform Trust.

<https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/the-importance-of-child-impact-assessments-for-children-affected-by-maternal-imprisonment/>

(PDF) Considering the Best Interests of the Child in Sentencing and Other Decisions Concerning Parents Facing Criminal Sanctions.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/373199747_Considering_the_Best_Interests_of_the_Child_in_Sentencing_and_Other_Decisions_Concerning_Parents_Facing_Criminal_Sanctions

(PDF) The Best Interests of the Child and the Sentencing of Offenders with Parental Responsibilities

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321310674_The_Best_Interests_of_the_Child_and_the_Sentencing_of_Offenders_with_Parental_Responsibilities

Relationships and how these are maintained during imprisonment- Children & Young People - Prison Advice and Care Trust.

<https://www.prisonadvice.org.uk/get-help/children-young-people/>

Children Heard and Seen Model Policy: Parental Imprisonment.

www.childrenheardandseen.co.uk/model-school-policy



+44 (0) 1772 537026



@LancsVRN



LancsVRN.co.uk



traumainformedlancashire.co.uk



lancsvru@lancashire.police.uk



Lancashire Violence Reduction Network County Hall,
Fishergate, Preston PR1 8XB



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