



WP2 Child-Centred Interviews: Interview Guide

Version 1.0 - October 2010

The purpose of the child-centred interviews is to explore the impact of having a parent in prison on the child or young person (CYP), including the child's development, family life, school and education, and leisure/social life. The intention is for the interview to include all the areas covered in the guide. The order in which issues are covered can vary. Some children and young people may be reticent about issues of imprisonment. Some of them may not have talked much about these issues before. Others may start talking about key issues sooner. It is important to start where the child or young person is, and to go at her/his pace.

The child can be shown, or have their own copy of the interview guide. Children interviewed will be aged from 8-16 years. Younger children will be encouraged to draw a picture to describe aspects of their family life, and their experience of having a parent in prison, if they would like to.

Information about the research project will be given to children and young people before the interview. Consent will have been obtained from their parent or carer. Consent forms will need to be child-friendly and age appropriate. The child or young person can provide written consent themselves either before or at the interview.

Some children and young people may wish to talk more about specific impacts, for example on life at school, or how their parent/carer has been affected. Although the plan is to try to cover all the areas in the guide, interviews may focus on more specific areas.

After some initial consultation, questions have been included about the child's knowledge about why their parent is in prison, and for how long. We recognise that these questions may be painful or upsetting for some participants. Sensitivity will be required by the interviewer. CYP have a right not to answer if that is their wish.

The child or young person should be offered the opportunity to be accompanied by a person of their choice during the interview. Alternatively, the CYP may wish their parent to be with them, or the parent may prefer this. We know that the parent's presence is likely to have an impact on the interview. Nonetheless, the parent's presence is acceptable, and may well be helpful in some cases. The researcher should emphasise that, for this interview, it is the CYP's views that are important.

Where consent is provided, interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed. If a CYP requests a copy this will have to be considered with care, with regard to child protection and safety concerns. The possibility that there could be adverse repercussions for the child if the transcript was seen by another family member must be taken into account. The transcript would need to be delivered to the CYP securely and safely.

Introduction

1. Interviewer introduces her/himself and says where they work. Interviewer explains the purpose of the interview (as stated above) to the child/young person (CYP). Interviewer explains that the interview will include questions about family life before and after the CYP's parent was sent to prison; questions about how this has impacted on the CYP and members of her/his family; questions about the CYP's school and

social life; questions about contact and visits to the imprisoned parent; and about how life could be improved for the CYP and their family.

2. Interviewer asks CYP if they are happy to go ahead with the interview. The child or young person can be asked to sign their consent at this stage, if they have not done so previously.
3. Interviewer asks if CYP is happy for the interview to be tape-recorded. Interviewer explains that this is so that there is a full record of what the CYP has said.
4. Interviewer explains that the tape-recording will be transcribed. The transcript will be seen only by members of the research team. The interviews will be analysed and will form a main part of the research report. The views of children and young people will come through strongly in the research.
5. All names, including the name of the CYP, addresses and any identifying details will be anonymised (this word will be explained to CYP as necessary).
6. Interviewer explains that everything the child says will be kept confidential. The only exception is if the CYP provides information about a child or adult being harmed, in which case the researcher has a duty to notify the police or social services.
7. Interviewer explains that the CYP has a right not to answer any question if they prefer not to do so. The CYP also has a right to stop the interview at any point, without giving reasons.
8. Interviewer explains that the research project includes interviewing the parent/carer looking after the CYP; and also, if possible, interviewing the parent in prison. These interviews will also focus on the impact of having a parent in prison on the CYP.
9. At this point, the interviewer asks the CYP if there is anything about the interview which they would like to be clarified (use age-appropriate language here).
10. Interviewer now proceeds to the main part of the interview.

Interview

Questions about family, school, and social life

- Q1 Please can you say who you are living with? If you have brothers and sisters, can you tell me their ages? Are there other members of your family, e.g. grandparents/aunts/uncles? Are there any other adults living with you? How closely have these adults been involved in looking after you?

Younger children may choose to draw a picture of their family. Older CYP may prefer to provide a genogram (interviewer to provide example of this).

- Q2 When you were growing up in your family, who mainly looked after you? Please can you describe any periods of separation between your parents or care givers?

(Prompts: mother/father/both; step-parent; grandparents; other relatives; others, e.g. foster-parents)

Q3 Were there any changes in who mainly looked after you when you were growing up? (Interviewer to ask if the CYP has lived in more than one family). Did you have to move between different homes/ If so, how many times did this happen?

Q4 Were either your mother or father or other carers away sometimes? Did this include either of your parents being away for periods of imprisonment? If so, how long was this for?

Q5 Please can you say what you liked or enjoyed about being with your mother or father, or other care givers/brothers and sisters?

(Prompts: having fun time together; having meals together; involved in games or sports together; going on trips/outings; going on holidays. Interviewer to draw out information about what CYP enjoyed about being with different family members).

Q6 Was there anything that you did not enjoy about being with your family?

(Prompts: e.g. times when you or someone in your family was ill; times when your mother or father, or other care giver was away; times when members of the family did not get on so well together, including arguments or violence). Use age-appropriate language here.

Q7 Please can you say what kind of school you go to: e.g. primary; secondary; State school; private, voluntary or faith school? What things do you like most about your school? Is there anything at your school you do not like so much?

(Prompts: subjects/activities/sports you enjoyed/did not enjoy; friends or teachers you liked being with/did not like being with. (CYP to be asked whether they have had experience of being bullied, and if so, what was the cause of this, and whether it was connected with having a parent in prison).

Q8 Are you going to school at the moment? Have you missed time at school? (Interviewer to draw out whether this has been for illness or unauthorised absence/truanting/exclusion). Has your missing school been for reasons connected with your mother or father being in prison?

Q9 Can you say a bit more about yourself? For example, do you have any special hobbies (or example *collecting things* or *computer games* or *outdoor activities*)? Which games or sports do you like best? Can you tell me about your achievements (things you have done well) or things that you are proud of?

Q10 Would you describe yourself as a fairly calm person, or do you tend to be an anxious person? How do you sleep? (Prompts: go to sleep straight away/ sleep well/difficult to get to sleep/wake up sometimes/wake up a lot/ often dream/often have nightmares). Has your sleep pattern changed since your father/mother went to prison?

Questions about other changes since your mother or father has been in prison

Q11 Please can you say what you can remember about the time when your parent was arrested and then taken to Court? Can you say how this impacted on you and on other members of your family?

Q12 Who is looking after you now, while your mother or father is in prison?

(Prompts: other parent/grandparents/relatives/foster-parents/other).

Q13 How have things changed since your father or mother has been in prison, for you; and for your parent /carer; for your brothers or sisters? How have you shared out roles/responsibilities? (Use age-appropriate language here).

(Important to check impact on each family member. Prompts: has there been more work to do at home, like house-work, cleaning up, making meals, washing up or washing clothes, shopping, having to help more looking after brothers and sisters, more work on Visiting days, more help needed for parent/carer?)

Q14 Can I ask if you know why your parent is in prison; and also for how long you think this will be?

Q15 Can I ask who else in your family knows why your mother or father is in prison?

(Prompts: everyone; just adults; other brothers and sisters).

Q16 What about outside your family? Do other relatives, or your school, or your friends know?

Q17 I wonder if you can tell me how you felt when your mother or father went to prison?

(For younger children you could use *Smiley Faces*. For older children use scale).
(Interviewer to record this)

1	2	3	4	5
<i>Very upset</i>	<i>Upset</i>	<i>Not too bad</i>	<i>Okay</i>	<i>Relieved / pleased</i>

Please could you say why you felt like that?

(Younger children to be given the opportunity of drawing a picture about having a parent in prison at this point; older young people may prefer to write about this).

Q18 Generally, can you say how life has been for you since your mother/father has been in prison?

1	2	3	4	5
<i>A lot worse</i>	<i>Worse</i>	<i>About the same</i>	<i>Better</i>	<i>Much better</i>

Q19 What do you think about talking to other people about your mother or father being in prison? Do you think this is useful/valuable for you or not useful/valuable? Who is it most useful to talk to?

Have you been able to talk to anyone about your mother or father being in prison?

(Prompts: to your parent /carer at home; to brothers or sisters; to friends; to a teacher; to another adult e.g. youth leader, social worker; or someone else).

Q20 Were you told it was okay to talk about this; or was it a "secret"?

Q21 Has your mother or father being in prison changed things at school; or with your friends; or how much you go out?

Visiting Prison

Q22 Please can you tell me if you have been to see your mother or father in prison? Can you say how many times? Please can you say who else went with you?

(Prompts: parent/brothers and sisters/relatives /other adults/friends).

Q23 Have you visited on weekdays? Or at the weekend?

Q24 How far have you had to travel to prison? How long does it take? How do you travel there?

Q25 Please can you say how you have found visiting the prison?

1	2	3	4	5
<i>Very difficult</i>	<i>Difficult</i>	<i>Okay</i>	<i>Quite enjoyable</i>	<i>Very enjoyable</i>

Please can you say in what way?

Q26 Have you visited prison on special Family Days? How have you found these compared with normal prison visits (Prompts: more enjoyable/same/less enjoyable)?

Q27 Please can you say how you think your parent /carer and brothers and sisters found visiting the prison?

Q28 Please could you tell me whether your school knows about your visits to prison?

Q29 Have you had to take any time off school for the visits?

Q30 Have you been able to talk to anyone about visiting the prison (e.g. parent /relatives/ friends /teacher/youth leader/social worker/other adults)?

Other contact with parent in prison

Q31 Do you use other ways to keep in contact with your parent in prison e.g. phone/text/ letters? How frequently do you use these (Prompts: daily/twice or more weekly/ weekly/fortnightly/less often)? How important are these ways of keeping in contact for you (prompts: very important /fairly important/not very important)? Are there are barriers for you in using these ways of keeping in contact?

POPS and other help available

Q32 Please can you say if you have had any contact with POPS (Partners of Prisoners and Families Support Group) (or other NGO in Germany, Romania and Sweden)?

Have you been to the POPS (or other NGO) Office in Manchester?

Have you been to POPS (or other NGO) groups for children and young people?

Have you been able to talk to other children or young people with a parent in prison about this? If so, please can you tell me about this?

Can you say how you have found POPS?

1	2	3	4	5
<i>Very unhelpful</i>	<i>Not very helpful</i>	<i>Okay</i>	<i>Helpful</i>	<i>Very helpful</i>

Please can you say in what way? What has been helpful at POPS? What has been unhelpful?

Q33 Has any other organisation or individual been able to help you, for example youth leader/social worker/teacher/other adults/other organisation?

Q34 Please can you say what would make things better for you while you have a parent in prison?

Q35 Please can you say what would make things better for your parent/carer and your brother(s) and sister(s) while you have a parent in prison?

Q36 Do you think there is enough support for children and young people with a parent in prison? If "yes", please can you say more about your experience of this kind of support? If "no", please go to Q 38

Q37 Who do you think could help?

(Prompts: other young people who have had a parent in prison; teachers/youth leaders/social workers; organisations like POPS; children's counsellors or therapists).

General question

Q38 Overall, how much difference has it made for you having your mother or father in prison?

1	2	3	4	5
<i>No difference at all</i>	<i>Not very much</i>	<i>A fair amount</i>	<i>Quite a lot</i>	<i>A great deal</i>

Please can you say in what way?

Looking to the future

Q39 Please can you say when you think your mother or father may be coming out of prison?

Q40 When your mother or father comes out of prison, do you think they will come home?

Yes	Not sure	No
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Q41 How will you feel about your mother or father coming back home?

1	2	3	4	5
<i>Not pleased at all</i>	<i>Not very pleased</i>	<i>Okay</i>	<i>Fairly pleased</i>	<i>Very pleased</i>

Q42 How would you like things to be for you and your family when your mother or father comes out of prison?

1	2	3	4
<i>Family back together again</i>	<i>Mother & father living separately</i>	<i>Prefer things as they are now</i>	<i>Other, please say</i>

End of interview

Interviewer: Thank you very much indeed. That covers all the questions I wanted to ask. Can I ask how you have found the interview?

1	2	3	4	5
<i>Very difficult</i>	<i>Quite difficult</i>	<i>Okay</i>	<i>Fairly straightforward</i>	<i>Straightforward</i>

Interviewer advises young person about whom they can talk to about any issues they have found difficult in the interview. In the UK, Child Line cards can be made available. Help could also be provided by POPS, or by Children’s Services. (Germany, Romania and Sweden to offer appropriate suggestions).

Q43 Is there anything else you would like to say about any of the questions you have answered?

Interviewer reminds CYP that the interview is confidential.

Interviewer provides contact details for themselves for the child or young person; and contact details for professionals / organisations that are available to help the CYP if they have any concerns arising from the interview.

Interviewer explains that gift vouchers are available for the CYP as an acknowledgement for their time, and to recognise the importance of their evidence for the research. Vouchers to be handed to the CYP, and receipt obtained.

Interviewer thanks CYP for taking part in the interview.

Reference

Pridmoe, P. and Bendelow, G. (1995) *Images of Health: Exploring beliefs of children using the “draw and write” technique*. Health Education Journal, 51, 473 - 488

Martin Manby
WP2 Lead
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