



**COPING WP3 (STAKEHOLDER AND CAREGIVER CONSULTATION)  
STAKEHOLDER GROUP: GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS INVOLVED IN POLICY  
RELATING TO CHILDREN/FAMILIES OF PRISONERS**

This document gives supplementary guidance on the stakeholder consultations that form WP3 of the COPING project. It should be used together with the general WP3 Stakeholder Consultation Guide and is not useable as a standalone document. It provides additional guidance on how to conduct consultations with government officials involved in policy relating to children/families of prisoners, as well as question schedules for interviews and focus groups.

## **ADDITIONAL STAKEHOLDER-SPECIFIC INFORMATION**

**Stakeholder type:** Policy makers – to influence.

**Areas of presumed knowledge:** Legal and political framework, ways of implementing recommendations.

### **Additional issues – before consultation**

*Problems of ‘gatekeeping’* may occur, with managers being involved in identifying research participants. Refer to general consultation guide for suggestions on resolving this.

*Different policies in different regions.* In countries with devolved or federal criminal justice systems, different regions may have potentially widely varying policies. For this reason, it is important to try to access government officials in each region you hope to influence.

*Consultation restrictions.* Government officials may be limited in the issues or details they can talk about, or are willing to discuss while being recorded. In such cases, try to obtain an answer (reminding them that they will be anonymised and that they can withdraw consent at a later stage) or at least an explanation of why this is an issue that can’t be discussed.

### **Additional issues – during consultation**

*Participants may lack detailed knowledge* of children of prisoners, because it does not fall within their government/policy remit. One aim of this consultation is to build relationships with and raise awareness of the issues among policymakers, so having participants with limited knowledge is less important than with other stakeholder groups. Try to put participants at ease if they are concerned about their lack of knowledge.

### **Additional issues – after consultation**

*Private discussions* may be difficult to arrange if the participants have to return to normal work immediately or the researchers have to leave the consultation area immediately after the consultation. Try to finish the consultation early to allow time for such discussions, and ensure that participants have your contact details and encourage them to get in touch later, if they want.

## INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

### *Introductory questions*

1. **Can you tell us your name and a little bit about your job?**
2. **What involvement do you have with children of prisoners?**  
Supplementary questions: Do you work directly with prisoners' children?  
Indirectly?

### *Core questions*

3. **In your experience, what do you think are the needs of children of imprisoned parents?**  
Supplementary questions: How are their needs different from those of other children? Why do you think this is?
4. **Are there any parts of their lives where they have particular needs?**  
Supplementary questions: What are their needs in relation to visits? Do they need help booking a visit? Accompaniment? What kind of support do they need before, during and after seeing their imprisoned parent? What are their needs in relation to other forms of contact with their imprisoned parent? Family relations? School/education? Free time? What are their emotional needs? Physical and mental health needs? Financial needs?
5. **What is different for the child after a parent is imprisoned? How do the child's needs change? Why do you think this is?**
6. **What kind of personal strength/resilience helps children manage when a parent is in prison?**  
Supplementary questions: Are there things they do to make themselves feel better about having a parent in prison? How helpful do you think these things are? Do they change when they have a parent in prison? How? Why? Are there things they find positive about having a parent in prison? What things?
7. **What support or help do you know of for children of prisoners?**  
Supplementary questions: What help is there for visiting imprisoned parents? What facilities for children are available at prison visits? What help is available for keeping in contact? Supporting the family? Education? Free time? What support is available for children's emotional needs? Physical and mental health needs? Financial needs?
8. **Who provides this support? How does the support available differ from child to child? Why do you think it differs?**  
Supplementary questions: Do other family members provide support? The imprisoned parent? Friends? Teachers? Social workers? NGOs?

Prison/criminal justice officials? What kind of support would you give?  
Who do children tell/talk to about having a parent in prison? Why do they talk to these people?

**9. In which areas of children's lives can they get most help? Why do you think this is?**

Supplementary questions: Is there help for them in relation to visits? Other forms of contact with the imprisoned parent? Relationships with other family members? School/education? Free time? Is there support for their emotional needs? Physical and mental health needs? Financial needs?

**10. Do you have any idea about how well the different types of support and programmes work? What is good and what is bad about them?**

Supplementary questions: What would you change to make them better?

**11. How much does the criminal justice system consider prisoners' children and their needs?**

Supplementary questions: Do different parts of the criminal justice system consider their needs differently? Do police consider it? Courts? Judges? Prison staff? Probation officers? Which aspects of the children's needs do they consider? What do they miss? Why do you think this is?

**12. What does the criminal justice system do to support children of prisoners and their needs?**

Supplementary questions: What do they do that's good/positive for children of prisoners? What do they do that's bad? How do their actions affect the children's emotions? Physical and mental health? Finances?

**13. What do you recommend to make sure that the needs of children of prisoners are met? Recommendations can relate to changes in policy, practice, or attitude.**

Supplementary questions: What changes can the police make to meet the needs of children of prisoners? What changes can courts make? Judges? Prison staff? Probation officers? NGOs? Social workers? Schools? Families? The imprisoned parent? Other children? In your experience, what things have worked best to change policy or make things better for the children? Why do you think this is?

**14. What one/three things should change to better support children of prisoners?**

Supplementary questions: What would help improve the emotional needs of children of prisoners? Physical and mental health needs? Financial needs? Is there anything that you would like to do differently?

**15. When should children be involved in research like this?**

Supplementary questions: Is it important for researchers to hear about what children have to say about the impact of prison? Why/why not? What are the benefits of including children in this research? What things need to be in place to make it okay for children to participate? Do you have any experience of children being in this kind of research? Can you tell us about it/give details?

*Final question*

**16. Is there anything else you would like to add?**

## FOCUS GROUP SCHEDULE

### *Initial/opening questions*

- 1. Can you all tell us who you are and what your job is?**
- 2. What involvement do you have with children of prisoners?**

### *Core questions*

- 3. What do you think are the needs of children of imprisoned parents?**  
Prompts: What are their needs in relation to visits? Contact with imprisoned parent? Family relations? School/education? Free time? What are their emotional needs? Physical and mental health needs? Financial needs?
- 4. What support and programmes exist to meet these needs?**  
Prompts: Can you give an example of something that works well? Something that works badly? What support do you give? What help is there for visiting? Keeping in contact? Supporting the family? Education? Free time? What support is available for their emotional needs? Physical and mental health needs? Financial needs?
- 5. How much do parts of the criminal justice system consider and support the needs of children of prisoners?**  
Prompts: How much do police consider their needs? Courts? Judges? Prison staff? Probation officers? Are there things they do well relating to children of prisoners? Things they do badly? How do their actions affect the children's emotional needs? Physical and mental health needs? Financial needs?
- 6. What do you recommend to make sure that the needs of children of prisoners are met?**  
Prompts: What one/three things should change to better support children of prisoners? What would help improve the emotional needs of children of prisoners? Physical and mental health needs? Financial needs? Is there anything that you would like to do differently? What changes can the police make to meet the needs of children of prisoners? What changes can courts make? Judges? Prison staff? Probation officers? NGOs? Social workers? Schools? Families? The imprisoned parent? Other children?
- 7. When should children be involved in research like this?**  
Prompts: Is it important for researchers to hear about what children have to say about the impact of prison? Why/why not? What are the benefits of including children in this research? What things need to be in place to make it okay for children to participate? Do you have any experience of

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children being in this kind of research? Can you tell us about it/give details?

*Final question*

**8. Is there anything else you would like to add?**