



**COPING WP3 (STAKEHOLDER AND CAREGIVER CONSULTATION)
STAKEHOLDER GROUP: IMPRISONED PARENTS**

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 imprisoned parents, as well as question schedules for interviews and focus groups.

ADDITIONAL STAKEHOLDER-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Stakeholder type: Information provider.

Areas of presumed knowledge: Experience of imprisoned parents, visits and other forms of contact, feelings about being a parent under these conditions.

Additional issues – before consultation

Problems of 'gatekeeping' may occur, with prison officials being involved in identifying research participants. Refer to general consultation guide for suggestions on resolving this.

Location and timing of consultations. Imprisoned parents will almost certainly need to be consulted within the prison where they are jailed. They may have restrictions on how long they can spend on the consultation, and/or be called away mid-consultation because of an emergency. Be prepared for short-notice changes to the consultation.

Entry restrictions. You may need to apply for specific permission to enter prisons; check with individual prisons what is needed and how long the process takes.

Ethical approval may be required from prison or regional/national authorities. Refer to general consultation guide and clarify whether different prisons need separate approval processes, and whether a single process will cover all consultation and stakeholder types.

Recording restrictions. Recording equipment is frequently banned in prisons; check this beforehand and ensure that multiple researchers are involved if you need to make written notes.

Involvement of prison officials. Prison officials may request or demand that they are involved in the consultation, either as observers during the consultation or that they see the material afterwards. All such moves should be resisted. Researchers should explain the importance of participant confidentiality and research independence to explain why such requests are inappropriate. In cases of potentially violent participants, arrangements can be made for researchers to summon assistance if required. In situations where prisons insist on a role, decisions should be made in consultation with the WP3 country leads and/or the project coordinator.

Additional issues – during consultation

Participants may talk about their personal experiences rather than about the issues more generally. Explain that the detailed individual consultations are separate and that while they can use personal examples to illustrate their points, this should not be the only focus. Questions are also phrased to help reduce the likelihood of this happening.

Additional issues – after consultation

Private discussions and follow-up may be particularly difficult with imprisoned parents, given their limited ability to communicate with the outside world. While most types of stakeholders can contact researchers after consultations with questions or concerns, this may not be possible for imprisoned parents: therefore, researchers may need to actively contact imprisoned parents to give them this opportunity, and/or obtain special permission for additional contact rights if necessary, so that imprisoned parents do not have to use limited personal contact rights to speak to you rather than their families.

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Introductory questions

1. **Can you tell us your name and a little bit about yourself?**
2. **Can you briefly tell us how many children of prisoners you know (yours and others) and how much contact you have with them?**

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 you? What are their needs in relation to other forms of contact with you? Other family members? 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? Are you able to give any support? 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 you? 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 parts 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? Imprisoned parents? 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 help 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

COPING WP3 (stakeholders and caregivers consultation)
Supplementary consultation guide – imprisoned parents

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 a little bit about yourselves?**
2. **Can you briefly tell us how many children of prisoners you know (yours and others) and how much contact you have with them?**

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 parents? Relations with other family members? 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 does 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? Social workers? NGOs? 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

COPING WP3 (stakeholders and caregivers consultation)
Supplementary consultation guide – imprisoned parents

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?